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THE EAST WINDOW AND THE CAR WINDOWS NEW

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The East Window

Books by Bert Leston Taylor

The So-Called Human Race

The Well in the Wood

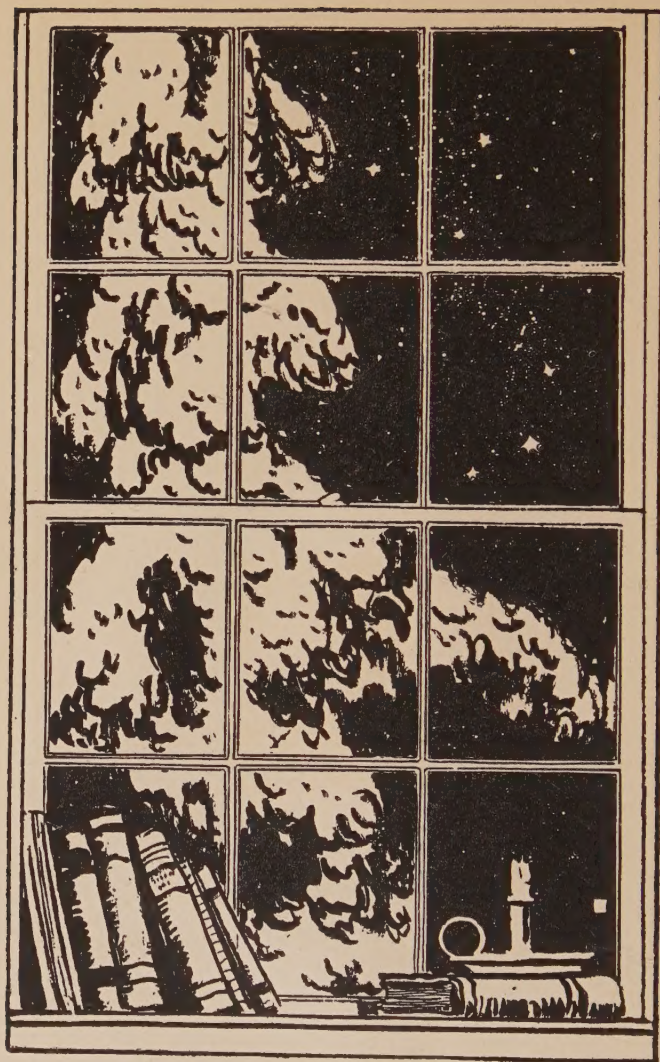
A Line O' Gowf or Two

The East Window

A Penny Whistle

In preparation

The Pipe Smoke Carry



The East Window

and The Car Window

by Bert Leston Taylor

With decorations by C. B. Falls

Foreword by James Rowland Angell



Alfred · A · Knopf

New York

Mcmxxiv

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Foreword

Endowed with an inexhaustible flow of kindly humour, enriched ever and again with adroit turns of wit, Bert Leston Taylor for a quarter of a century brought to tens of thousands at the beginning of each new day smiles and laughter and refreshment of spirit. His inimitable flair for droll captions to be set over items of news or clippings from the press would alone entitle him to a place beside our great humourists. Occasionally the "Colum" would carry some fugitive bit of verse, or a touch of sentiment cast in exquisite prose, suggesting a wide-ranging and sensitive love of nature.

In *The East Window* this side of Taylor's genius is happily preserved for us and set forth with a quaint literary charm and distinction which will bring delight to all readers and especially to those who were of the great circle to whom he daily spoke through the columns of the *Chicago Tribune*.

With a strongly romantic and poetic vein

Foreword

running through their pages the essays disclose a bold but tender spirit deeply in love with cloistered woods and running water, with stars and clouds, with birds and flowers and every shy wild thing—with nature in all her moods and by choice those that are most aloof. To read them is to lament once again that so rare a soul should have been struck down just as its powers had reached their prime.

In *The Car Window* one meets more nearly the B. L. T. of the "Line"—a strong flavour of New England Yankee tempered by long sojourn in the Middle West and by a youth spent in New York—shrewd, alert, full of amusing tales and still more amusing turns of phrase. Only one quite devoid of the sense of humour can read it without delight.

It is a happy circumstance that these records of a strong and gentle spirit, so richly gifted in the finer human traits, are now to be preserved among the treasures of our national literature, and the world owes a debt of gratitude to his wife, lacking whose devotion and skill, these fragments might never have been gathered into this enduring form.

JAMES R. ANGELL

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The East Window



I

A BIT of Chicago's water life may be viewed from our East Window. With the closing in of winter a variety of small craft are hauled up on the beach and hooded over, and when the spring comes there is a pleasant activity on the shore, and a pungent odour of fresh paint. It seems almost time for these, so delusive is this first morning of February, with its soft grey-blue sky, and thin mists, and piping south-east wind.

There is no salt in the air, and the lack of it reminds me, by exclusion, of a window in an old house in Connecticut in which we used to live. We called it the Captain Wilmot Window because from it we could see Captain

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Benny Wilmot coming down in the morning to his oyster boats, and plodding homeward in the dusk. The Captain specialized in oysters and weather.

I have discussed the weather with all states of minds, from philosophers to débutantes; but as I remember, the note of persistent enthusiasm was always lacking. Captain Benny was the sole exception. In five years of casual intercourse, morning and evening, I never knew him to fail to mention the weather, and in terms of commendation. Were it a "day of the cloud in fleets," of sparkling waves and tonic south-west wind, his rapture crystallized in the salutation, "Ain't it a bee-u-tiful day!" Were it a day of the cloud in battle formation, of north-east gale and slanting rain, still there was something to be said for it—a good deal, in fact. A letter from tidewater, just received, mentions that Captain Benny, though bent with years, is "just as spry as ever and just as enthusiastic about the weather."

Some of our friends are leaving Chicago for the Bahamas, and I pretend an envy that I do not actually harbour. I am not attracted by the southland. Rather than pursue sum-

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mer down the meridian I prefer to follow
northward in the footsteps of spring. I do
not fancy palms and opulent orchids, but
pine needles and the pale spray of enchanter's
nightshade. My star is not Acrux, but Po-
laris. Happily—

“This world is so full of a number of things
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.”



II

“**P**OETICALLY, a window,” says the dictionary, defining “casement”; and casement we should prefer to call it, perhaps because it brings up Keats’ unforgettable line and because it opens on waters perilous as those in faery lands forlorn—Lake Michigan’s expanse, now churned to wintry foam. If it opened on nothing more than the blank wall of an apartment building we should still prefer to think of it as a casement. In speaking it would have to be a window; one would not invite a guest to “sit nearer the casement”—unless the guest happened to be a professional poet. But—

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when we build that House we shall have casements, not windows.

There is so much room for pure magic in certain words that one resents the attempts of reformers to rob them of their power. Of course, to the great multitude of Peter Bells, words and yellow primroses are only words and yellow primroses; but to those who have a feeling for the symbols of thought they are something more. It is not necessary to compile a list of One Hundred Best Words. This one may stir your fancy; that one, mine. Thus, Saskatchewan may not, conceivably, move you; whereas I find its syllables as potent as fancy ever pronounced. I have only to see or hear them, and men and their movements, town streets and skyscrapers melt away. Spires and chimney-pots change to pointed firs, and the roar of the city becomes the roar of white water.

Henley was a master hand at arranging wonder-working words. Witness—

“Samarcand!

That name of names! That star-vaed belvedere
Builded against the Chambers of the South!

That outpost on the Infinite!”

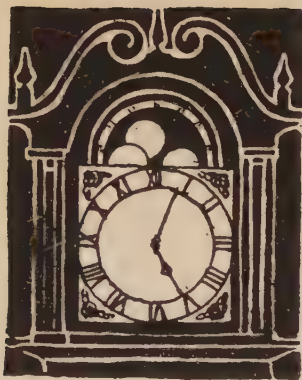
and a little farther on—

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"The promise of wistful hills—

The shining, shifting Sovranties of Dream."

Now, "Sovereignties" and "Sovranties,"
you will agree, are very different words.
And so—you may also agree—are "window"
and "casement."



III

AS there is nothing between our East Window and the rim of the world, it is a target for the sun's first arrows, and on winter mornings it is a cheerful window to sit by. Street noises are few. By night even these are gone; and there are long stretches of stillness—not the less still for the grave tick-tock of the tall clock. This clock, more than a century ago, was built in Burslem, which, as you may know, is the "Bursley" of Arnold Bennett's tales.

A friend, whose literary judgments are exact, tells me that Mr. Bennett is not a genius, but a man who by sheer industry has

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raised mediocrity to its highest power. Accepting this estimate, I may maintain that he has mastered the trade of writing. He has visualized "The Five Towns" for me in a few lines. It is a singular thing, this trick of arranging words. One writer may use a dozen pages to describe a village street, and leave you with no clear notion of it; another will sketch it in a short paragraph, and you may shut your eyes and see the place.

Mr. Bennett has learned, too, the rare art of endowing "uninteresting people" with an extraordinary interest. Hardy had this great gift. The Mayor of Casterbridge and Willie Price of the Five Towns are not persons I should care to spend a great deal of time with, but their fictional fortunes absorb me.

Incidentally the author of "Clayhanger" has added an interest to our tall clock. "I. Sharratt" is the name on the fine brass dial, and he was an honour to his trade, for his work has outlasted his name. The clock keeps as good time and is apparently in as good condition as when it first struck the hours in the heart of "The Five Towns," many years before the oldest of us were born.



IV

IN one of Molière's plays, "Le Médecin Malgré Lui," the wife of Sganarelle reproaches him for selling their furniture to buy drink. "You have sold the very bed from under me," she says. "You will get up all the earlier," he answers. "You have not left me a stick in the whole house," she cries. "The less trouble in moving," the scamp responds. Here we have the whole philosophy of furniture. Thoreau echoes it, somewhere in Walden, when he speaks of furniture as shackles on our freedom.

Each of us, at some time, has wished his household goods at the bottom of the sea, and has felicitated, in passing, the tenement

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dweller whose entire possessions were observed loaded in a single cart. For not many of us are so pleasantly circumstanced as Thoreau. We cannot run over to Mr. Emerson's for an ax, or a chair, or a dinner. The task of living is as exacting and as monotonous as the task by which we earn a living; we cannot take even a two weeks' vacation from it; and whether we dwell in a log cabin in the woods or in a mansion in the city we must have things to "do with." We try to shirk the task of living by dwelling in hotels; but that, at best, is a dismal existence.

Moving day would not be so dreaded were it not for the human weakness for collecting junk. In the cave of the prehistoric man there was no doubt a boulder—the original "what-not"—covered with shells and coloured stones; and the modern mantelpiece and corner cabinet are first cousins to that boulder. We surround ourselves with rubbish and burden our minds with rubbishy desires, we clutter our houses and our heads, and then we complain that "life is growing more complex every day."

Our house cleanings are nothing of the sort; we merely dust and readjust. Once a

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year at least we should weed our possessions and cast out the junk. Annually, too, we should weed our minds and clear out the dust traps. Then we might find that much of the complexity of modern life would disappear.



V

WE can see a great deal from our East Window, especially on a cloudless night, when the constellations cross the watery horizon line and swing across the sky. Star-rise and Star-down! There are times, one being in the mood, when these things seem as important as the daily doings on our planet's crust.

One point of light remains stationary. It defines a small window in a shack situated on the stretch of weed-sown sand that lies between our habitation and the lake. The light by night and the shack by day add nothing to the prospect. They bring up an odd sensation that I experienced one morning in

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the north wilderness. I was threading an especially difficult piece of forestland, following the turnings of a river, and paused to rest. Propping my packsack against a spruce, I lighted a pipe and scanned the surrounding tangle for a glimpse of fur or feather. The silence was as deep as that which wraps the Poles, except that in the wood nature may be heard to breathe. A lonelier, and lovelier, place was not to be imagined, and I sat and smoked in a drowsy meditation until my eyes lighted on something that thrilled and startled. It was only a slash on the bole of a birch, six feet above ground, but unmistakably a blaze; it told me that some one else had recently passed that way, and the knowledge took some of the blue out of the sky and lessened the "pleasure in the pathless woods." And when, following the blaze, I came upon a bed of yellowed boughs, a tin can, and a newspaper, the spot seemed unutterably dreary and—lonesome. The dictionary offers "lonesome" as a synonym for "lonely"; but so many synonyms are nothing of the sort.

"There is a rapture by the lonely shore." I remember a lonely shore where Rapture's self abode: a natural meadow gay with

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swamp flowers and (where the land was higher) decked with the wild rose and the laurel; a river singing happily because its long journey to the Big Water was almost done; a lagoon fringed with sagittaria—magical under moonlight;—the whole set in a frame of pines and spruces.

I mentioned this lovely, lonely spot to a man familiar with that part of the country. "Yes," said he, nodding; "that's the lonest hole on the shore."

It probably is—now; for they have begun to run logs on the river.



VI

COMING out of a friend's house the other night, a little after twelve, I was surprised to see Orion hanging low in the west: it reminded that winter is in its last month, to speak by the almanac, and that the spring constellations will soon occupy the eastern sky.

One of our home-going party remarked that he did not know one star from another—a not uncommon disclosure, but always surprising. Amazing on one occasion. In the middle of Lake Superior, one brilliant October night, the captain of an ore vessel confessed to me that the only star he knew and looked for was the pole star: he steered by that. In

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twenty years of navigating the lakes he had never cared to know more. Twenty years he had seen the constellations rise out of the inland sea, pass over his head and vanish with the dawn—and he had never asked the names that man has given to them.

One day in northern Minnesota I was tramping through the forest with an odd stick of humanity—a trapper and a bit of a hermit—whom I had engaged to pilot me to the headwaters of a certain trout stream. I had lately been studying the flora of the state; so, as we wound through the wood, I would halt to pull up this flower and that, in the hope of finding new varieties. This aroused the curiosity of my guide, and he was vastly interested to learn that the thousand and one plants around us had each its name; not only a common name, but a sounding Latin one. Presently he fell to pulling up flowers and asking for their names; and he was not content with the common tag, he wanted the Latin appellation—if I happened to remember it—and the longer the better. He was genuinely interested, and I am sure that thereafter his forest presented a different face to him.

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One of the many good sayings of John Burroughs is that we ought not to make a "dead set" at nature. We get more joy from the brook or bird or flower or star that we see casually or unexpectedly than from the things that we go forth deliberately to view. Thus, a week or two ago a Chicago gentleman, standing on the beach at Colon in the hour before the dawn, and thinking only of the train for Panama, raised his eyes suddenly and for the first time saw the Southern Cross.



VII

A TOPAZ star flashes in the east not many hours after sundown. Arc-turus, farthest and fastest of the classic suns, signals that the winter is nearly spent. Annually this cheering mes-sage is flashed from the same apparent point in space; yet in the past twelvemonth Arc-turus has dropped like a plummet through the void, millions on millions of miles. This is the thing that baffles comprehension—that these familiar stars, fixed, to our eyes, like jewels in a crown, are actually moving through space in every direction, and seem-ingly with as little directional purpose as a swarm of fireflies—that lesser firmament

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which lends an added beauty to a summer night.

So the majestic march of the constellations is only illusion; and the wonderful poise of the universe—is it more real? The fret and fury on our planet's crust may be the rule throughout the Cosmos. Disorder may be heaven's first law. A solacing reflection for earthlings who bewail their own lack of poise.

Interesting phenomena attend the chance contact of sun with sun: as they pass each other there is much wrenching and twisting—and new worlds, new systems of worlds, are born. Something of this sort happens when two men of opposing minds come to a conflict of ideas: convictions are uprooted; certainties are twisted beyond recognition; dead doubts are disinterred. But new ideas, new systems of ideas, may be born.

Putting aside a metaphor so imposing: I am glad to meet a man who differs with me in almost everything, from macaroons to immortality. He may for the moment riddle my philosophy of life, unsettle long-settled beliefs, uproot the flowers of faith; but one is the better for such convulsions. The mind requires a stirring up occasionally, as well as

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the body; mental biliousness is a common disorder.

It is wise now and again to question old faiths, old opinions, old prejudices. One need not fear the inventory. What is good will assuredly be retained; what is rejected will make room for something worthier.



VIII

Pour avoir du goût, il faut avoir de l'âme.

—Vauvenargues.

ANOTHER portent of Spring, as pleasantly recurrent as the signal from Arcturus, is the little circular from Vermont, reminding one that if he wishes his regular supply of maple sugar it would be as well to order now as later. The supply of pure maple sugar is limited; this fact considered, it is surprisingly cheap. One reason is that the demand is limited: most people would as soon have sorghum.

Lord, how the world is given to sorghum! It delights in sorghum poetry and sorghum novels; it holds its sides at sorghum plays;

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it keeps time with its feet at sorghum concerts; it listens with bowed heads to sorghum sermons. Sorghum forever! The world's supply of it is inexhaustible.

It isn't a matter of cost. Infrequently the price may compel a choice of sorghum; more often the original may be had for less money than the imitation; and this is especially true of the products of the arts. No, it is a matter of taste; and the world is very well satisfied with sorghum.

A minority—there is always a minority—despise imitation and fraud, whether in literature or blackberry jam, and these will have the genuine or go without any. Such people are commonly looked down upon; sometimes they are referred to as “high-brows.” A desolating reproach!—but they that writhe under it have the consolation that at present there is enough maple sugar and other things of fine flavour to go round;—which would not be the case if the world's palate should suddenly become difficult to please.

And so,—pass the sorghum!



IX

"And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow."

THERE is no life on Mars, say one group of astronomers. But—if there is none now, there doubtless has been; and I wonder whether the average Martian was as little interested in his planet as the average Earthian is in this. Did he, at twenty, count the springs that yet remained to him, and reflect how little room there was to look at things in bloom? Or was spring to him—as it is to most of us—no more than a convenient designation, a symbol of sarsaparilla, of

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housecleaning, of new fashions in clothes, and of other material things?

In those to whom the season is more than a name, the recurring miracle of spring engenders a still deeper feeling as the years pass; for each counting of the little store of springs shows one the less, and not to see the things in bloom is a loss irreparable. The stirring of the mould, the greening of the boughs, the coming of the birds,—these things are medicine for the mind, the best of tonics; for the mind requires purging more than the body, since the body is to a great degree controlled by the mind.

And he who has watched with sympathetic eyes the unfolding of fifty springs may close those eyes in peace. It is not likely that greater wonders are in store for his translated spirit.



X

"That inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude."

FANCY wings northward these days;
and footing old paths with Fancy, I
am impressed by a curious limitation
of the "inward eye"; for the forest vistas of
the Pipesmoke Trail may be seen only in
flashes. The arc of a cataract, the bend of a
stream, an iris at the lake-edge, dancing under
rain, the trail across the burnt hill, the camp
among the popples, the blanketed form of a
comrade,—glimpsed when the night breeze
fans the embers of the fire,—these are Mem-
ory's moving pictures. One glance, and the
scene is gone.

Assumably this limitation of the eye of

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Memory is common to all of us; and no doubt in the jungles of German psychology and metaphysics there are printed reams on the subject; but I have never happened on anything touching the matter. Much has been written in recent years about the mystery of sleep, and dreams; but I have never found anything that accounted satisfactorily for many of my adventures in Dreamland. "Dreams," says Dr. Coriat, "lay bare the innermost secrets of the heart, past experiences, wishes, desires." Why, then, do I not revisit the glimpses of the wilderness moon? I have never dreamed of being in the forest. Are the adventures of the subconscious mind confined to streets and houses, and—railway stations?

For we are forever missing the train. Or, if we arrive at the station in time, it is only to discover that we have left coat or hat behind, or even more necessary garments; and we are in a worse predicament than Bedreddin Hassan, that, to me, most delightful character in all

"The Book of rocs,
Sandalwood, ivory, turbans, ambergris,
Cream-tarts, and lettered apes, and calendars,
And ghouls, and genies."



XI

THERE has been going the rounds a saying attributed to Emerson, but diligent search of the sage's books has failed to run it down. Who first wrote or said—

"If you can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mousetrap than your neighbour, though you build your house in the woods the world will make a beaten path to your door."

It has a slight Concord flavour, and I am willing to believe that Emerson said it. Let others search till the cows come home, moved by the same spirit that sent Peary to the Pole.

Many more familiar sayings are of as

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doubtful paternity. Who first said, "Consistency, thou art a jewel"? It doesn't matter; it is not much of a saying, anyhow—much less effective, and true, than Emerson's dictum, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." Consistency, like many other glittering nouns, requires a qualifying adjective.

And who first said, "It is the beginning of the end"? It is attributed to Talleyrand; but Talleyrand, like Homer, knew a good thing at sight, and promptly adopted it. This tender feeling for an orphan phrase and readiness to lend one's name to it, is a characteristic of literary greatness. It is, perhaps, Mr. Roosevelt's strongest literary trait, next to his warm regard for the obvious. He believes, with the Marquis de Vauvenargues, that the discoveries of the past ages belong less to their first authors than to those who give them a currency practically useful.

Flowers of speech, unlike the flowers of the fields, are preserved from withering by much handling and passing about. Inspired by a great occasion, a man flings forth a telling phrase: it is caught up and passed on, and

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presently it is fixed in printer's ink. And full many a flower is born to blush unseen—even in an age that encourages every man to be his own Boswell.



XII

ES war einmal—as the Brothers Grimm begin—a Professor of Chemistry who knew a little about botany and wished to know more. Among his acquaintances was a young man who knew nothing about botany, but wished to know a great deal. The Professor explained that to know a great deal about botany meant many years of study; but he suggested that, as the spring was opening, they set a watch on wood and hill and meadow, and report daily the manifestations of the earth's awakening. And so the next morning—it was May, for spring came slowly to that high northern latitude—they sallied forth with microscope and Gray's Manual,

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and matched eyes for a glimpse of the first wildflower.

The professor won, for his vision, like an astronomer's, was trained. The flower, I remember (and an old notebook confirms), was the golden saxifrage; but no notebook is required to recall the scene—a broad meadow bounded by a tumbling river and a grove of hardwoods. Entering this grove, we found *uvularia* and *trillium*, *anemone* and sweet white violet; each plant being carefully analysed (for my benefit) before we searched for the next. And so each day a new group of flowers—among them more than one rare find, among orchids,—until summer, with her great train of blossoms and ferns and grasses, thrust more work upon us than we could bring off.

I have a notion that the things one never forgets are the things one learns in an interesting way; and that the only persons who should be permitted to teach are those who are competent (and disposed) to make the facts of the Battle of Lexington as interesting as the multiplication table. I do not remember learning anything at school, but I remember where the Professor and I found every one

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of the three-hundred-odd plants which we classified in the spring of 1897; and I can recall nearly all the Latin names. For with each plant there was the joy of discovery.

The quest of the unknown! The joy of discovery! One man stands in a woodland path and scrutinizes through a microscope the heart of a tiny flower. Another man—perhaps at the same moment—looks through a telescope upon a new star. And both share “the incommunicable thrill of things” with the adventurer who stood “silent upon a peak in Darien.”



XIII

A CORRESPONDENT, known to me only by two characters of the alphabet, expresses the thought that the lovely lyrics of "A Shropshire Lad" affect her as no other poetry has affected her. I think I know the mood. Greater poets have sung their way into memory, but no truer poet than A. E. Housman; his lines are unforgettable.

No poet can be the same thing to all men. Comparatively few people care for or can appreciate poetry, and not all these care for one kind. To be a poet is to be misunderstood, even by lovers of poetry; and this whether the poet be a worker in words, in musical characters, in paint, or marble, or wood.

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In the case of the worker in words the misunderstanding seldom becomes controversial, for poetry recitals are rare, and the journals of civilization do not maintain critics to applaud or condemn the recitalists. But if the poet be a musician the case is different; he is misunderstood constantly, and the journals maintain critics to condemn (but more frequently to applaud) the misunderstanding. The sad thing is that a poet should be maltreated for no better reason than to lend variety to a program.

Differences of opinion about poets are interesting as providing matter for conversation, but they are of no great importance. The important topics are the tariff, the weather and—the theatre. "Oh, the dear theatre!" Everybody knows everything about it. A person might hesitate to pronounce a flat opinion upon a new ode or a new symphony; but there is no such angelic diffidence in the case of a new play and the manner of its performance.

No, every one knows everything about the drama. Wherein is discovered why dramatic critics are the most fiercely despised of men.



XIV

“And walk among long, dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done,
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.”

“**W**HAT does it mean?” I have been asked. I am sure I don’t know. What does the Brahms Intermezzo, opus 116, No. 4, mean?—Nothing could be more beautiful. The poem and the intermezzo are both music, of a particular kind; and if you can read the one and hear the other without experiencing a queer feeling in the throat, without instant apprehension of exquisite beauty, then this music is not meant for you. Other music, quite as good, may be

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meant for you, but this particular music is not.

Happily, there are other kinds of poetry, and it is possible to like all kinds. One has preferences, of course: mine happens to run to the misty—not necessarily the mystical, as that implies a hidden meaning. I am not concerned with meanings. Much of the poetry I like classifies simply as music; it is not to be turned inside out and scrutinized for a “meaning.” If it produces an effect similar to that which a page of beautiful music produces, it has justified itself, and there is nothing to argue about.

A poem may be as lucid as “Old Grimes” or “The Old Oaken Bucket” (a catalogue of remembered commonplaces), or as nebulous as “Kubla Khan” (an adventure of the subconscious mind). It may be packed with majestic meanings, or as devoid of such as the wind crying in the sedge. If the poet sets your fancy winging, induces a certain mood, he has discharged his chief obligation, to “articulate sweet sounds together.” And whether his song was set down in white-hot inspiration or laboriously fashioned through much travail, is all one. We ask only the result.

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To quote from another fine poem of Mr.
Yeats,—

“A line will take us hours maybe;
Yet if it does not seem a moment’s thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.”



XV

“**F**RANCESCO” inquires: “Can you give me a few brief suggestions for judging the ‘goodness’ of verse.” I should like to, Francesco, but I don’t know of any rules. I have just enough of the critical faculty to save me from setting up as a critic. I have only preferences, and one should not thrust preferences upon other people. Preferences are not the result of sophistication, of development; they are born. So we may all (except those whose trade it is to criticize) fall back on the bromide one hears in every picture gallery and concert hall: “I don’t know a thing about it, but I know what I like.”

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Still, good poetry has certain characteristics by which it may be recognized. For one thing, it does not depend on rhyme for its music; the best of Henley's work is unrhymed. Again, in good poetry there is a minimum of commonplace lines. And again, the verses sing, without being singsong. The rhythm may be steady, as in so much of Swinburne's work, or broken, as in so much of Mr. Yeats'. I prefer irregular, shifting rhythms.

The absence of the commonplace does not necessarily imply the presence of the extraordinary or the bizarre. Open Mr. Yeats' poems at any page and select any line. It may be a wonderful flight of fancy, like "The silver apples of the moon"; or a description, like "The honey-pale moon lay low on the sleepy hill"; or so simple a statement as "A man came slowly from the setting sun";—but always, inevitably, it is a poetical line. Precisely why this is so, eludes my uncritical mind. To paraphrase Sheridan, "The line is a very pretty line as it stands; we should only spoil it by trying to explain it."



XVI

THE definition of good criticism, ascribed to Anatole France, "the adventures of a soul among masterpieces," implies existence of the masterpieces; these being granted, I take it to be the business of the soul merely to relate its adventures, without explanatory charts. Were I an accredited critic "I would give no man a reason upon compulsion." Explanations are futile. One might maintain that William Butler Yeats is the most poetical of poets; pressed for a reason, one could only say, perhaps, that Yeats seems incapable of an unpoetical line.

Lacking the critical faculty, and the presumption to detail my adventures, I should

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not venture to declare that this line is a poetical line and that line is not; nor what the something in a line is that makes it poetical; the simpler the line, the subtler is that something. Almost everybody who writes turns out now and then a poetical line, and may say to himself, "Now that would do very well in a sonnet." Unfortunately one good line does not make a sonnet; whereas every summer contains at least fourteen swallows. Our minor poets (the adjective is possibly superfluous) do not appreciate this as fully as they should.

The estimable people who write the strange verses that one finds in magazines strive for the unusual word, the bizarre phrase. A true poet like Yeats achieves his effects with such simple symbols as these:

I heard the old, old men say,
"Everything alters,
And one by one we drop away."
They had hands like claws, and their knees
Were twisted like the old thorn tree
By the waters.
I heard the old, old men say,
"All that's beautiful drifts away
Like the waters."



XVII

ONE of the most gratifying of intellectual experiences is to feel that one has learned enough about pictures and music and books to permit one to express candid opinions, without caring particularly how they may be received. My knowledge of these things is not enormous, but I no longer consciously delude myself about artists and their products. If a new symphony or a new picture is without meaning or interest to me I would as soon say so as not.

To what extent I *unconsciously* delude myself is another question, and one that at times perplexes me not a little. Standing before

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a favourite picture, for example, I find myself wondering (as many other persons have perhaps wondered) whether my admiration would be as high if I were seeing the picture for the first time and the artist's name were not attached. No such uncertainty exists in respect of the other arts. Listening to a musical composition, one may exclaim: "How charming! Who wrote it?" But with a new picture the exclamation is more likely to be: "Who painted it? How charming!"

I am extremely fond of the collection of Inness's works in the Art Institute, especially the pictures that represent the painter's latest "manner," as the phrase is. They mark an advance, unquestionably; so I have been told, so I have told others, and so I tell myself, though with less assurance. I haven't the least doubt about a canvas dated 1867—a tightly painted, straightaway piece of work; if I were seeing it for the first time, and it were signed "John Jones," I should be every bit as pleased with it. But I am not so certain regarding a canvas on the opposite wall, painted a quarter-century later—perhaps my favourite Inness. It is a great picture, I really think so; still I can't help wondering whether,

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if I were seeing it for the first time, I should not say: "Who painted it? Oh, Inness? Isn't it a masterpiece?"

And this painter standing near me, so sure in his judgments, who would regard my wonderings as extremely naïve—would his acclaim be instant if the picture were being exhibited anonymously? Undoubtedly. But there is no convenient way of putting the matter to test.



XVIII

WE think—many of us—that life is at its full when we are in the midst of the crowd, in a day alive with incident or an evening feverish with gaiety. But life is at its full—for many of us—in the brief interludes when, alone with tranquil thoughts, we may sit, each at his own east window, and look out into a quiet morning. These are the glimpses that make us “less forlorn.”

The mind is automatically checked from long dwelling on the mystery of nature, and not even a metaphysician would say: “It is a fine morning; I will sit by the window and philosophize.” Nor is it necessary to philoso-

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phize. It is enough to be in tune with things, to have thoughts that pass beyond the horizon, however amorphous or fragmentary they may be.

It is amazing how little time the average man gives to the most rudimentary meditation. To many people these interludes are wholly unknown, and I count them the most unhappy of mortals. There can be no argument on that score; their manner, their speech, their faces betray them. Their great fear is that they may be left to themselves; a theatre engagement unexpectedly cancelled throws them into a panic. It is for these people that innumerable places of entertainment have been constructed and for whom innumerable others are projected—their increase being out of all proportion to the increase in population.

A scientist proclaimed the other day that woman is losing her little toe; that eventually she will possess but four of these useful and ornamental bits of anatomy. But man is in danger of losing something more important than his little toe—his ability to think.



XIX

"This world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

I'M sure we should, too, but most of us are not; because so few of the "number of things" happen to be our individual private property. You may have heard the remark, more than once, "I like Mr. So-and-So because he is interested in things." He may be; but an analysis of his lively curiosity in the world about him will commonly show that he is not interested in things as things, but in his possession of them. My neighbour, for example, has a passion for flowers—his own; he is extremely fond of children—his own; he adores his wife—his

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own (properly). But he is not interested objectively in flowers, in children, nor in the institution of matrimony.

I once knew some very agreeable people, who had a charming country house situated among woods and surrounded by everything that a well-appointed country house should have. These friends were "interested in things"—landscape gardening, interior decoration, pictures and books and music, and so on; and it was a pleasure to stroll up to their place of a Sunday afternoon or moonlight evening, and sit on the wide veranda and chat. Conversations never lagged; but one day it occurred to me that, in all the time I had known these people, we had never discussed anything except their possessions—how picturesquely the cottage was situated, how beautifully it was furnished, what a fine view one had of the valley, how attractive was the old fashioned garden, with the background of natural woodland, how well the collie decorated the rug, and similar things. I must have been willing and bold enough to have ventured on more abstract topics, but I could not recall having been given a lead.

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The most interesting men, to me, are astronomers, geologists, botanists, biologists, and the like; for these are primarily interested in planets, and flowers, and mountain building, and life—not in real estate, and the orderly arrangement of tulips, and the building of houses, and living. Primarily, I say; for I am aware that a man whose life is spent among the stars may, on occasion, talk as much about his horse, or his chickens, or his tulips, as the next man.



XX

"I'll not hurt thee, says my uncle Toby, rising from his chair and going across the room, with the fly in his hand,—I'll not hurt a hair of thy head:—Go, says he, lifting up the sash, and opening his hand as he spoke, to let it escape;—go, poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee?—This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me."

THIS appealed to me once, as it appealed to Master Shandy, as a very pretty bit of sentiment; but now the sentiment is as old fashioned as the punctuation, and false to fact; for science instructs us that the world is not wide enough for both flies and humans. Before science interested itself in the matter the fly was regarded with more than toler-

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ance. "Busy, curious, thirsty fly, drink with me and drink as I," wrote a seventeenth century poet. And baby's precious nose, now vigilantly guarded, was once a parade ground for tickling toes. The fly was annoying, but he was a scavenger, and it was assumed that his scavengering was beneficial to mankind. Now we pursue the pest around the meridian. The survival of the fittest is the survival of the cleanest. The "swatter" is mightier than the sword.

A sociable wretch is a fly. You cannot take a journey without him, or arrive where he is not. In the heart of the desert, in the depth of the ancient forest, by Greenland's icy mountains and India's coral strand, he buzzes briskly in his season; and we shall never be shut of him. When Macaulay's traveller from New Zealand takes his stand on a broken arch of London bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's he will pause frequently to brush a fly from his nose, and Tom Hood's last man will leave the world to darkness and—to flies.

I wonder what my Aunt Jennie (now departed) would think of the present campaign against the nuisance. How dear to

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this heart is the memory of the farmhouse kitchen on the top of Goshen hill! I can see the table, set for dinner, and dotted with a thousand flies—staking out claims on the sugar, navigating the cream, wiping their feet on the cookies, and merging their identities with the huckleberries. I think we gave them one grand “shoo” before we sat down; but they expected this formality, and rejoined us almost instantly.



XXI

"But when they rose again, the white stranger had vanished; on the spot where she had knelt there gushed out of the turf a little silver spring."

JUST one hundred years ago the immortal story of "Undine" was published in Berlin. Its author, Friedrich Heinrich Karl Baron de la Motte-Fouqué, died in 1843, and I wish I might strew on his grave today an armful of waterlilies.

You have often thought, have you not? what a drab world this would be without books; especially you have treasured the memory of one or two unforgettable tales, and you may have preserved, as I have, a yellowing copy of "Undine." This old romance

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has coloured existence for me more than any other book; I mean by that, that the tale laid a spell on me in childhood that is as potent then as now. I always hear Undine's voice in forest rivers, and a wooded slope under moonlight becomes the edge of an illimitable enchanted forest.

Undine! What pictures gather at the name! The fisherman's hut on the peninsula; the Knight Huldbrand riding through the wild forest, beset by grinning figures and vapoury illusions; the tall man in the white mantle, watching through the hut window the wedding of Undine and the Knight; the Lady Bertalda wandering at night in the Black Valley; the grinning waggoner and the grey horses swimming in the magical flood;—these things are the very essence of Fancy—fadeless as the “silver apples of the moon.”

I was reading the other day that Richard Wagner, the night before he died, read “Undine” aloud to his family; and then going to the piano, he played the finale of the nymphs in “Rheingold”:

“Traulich und treu ist's nur in der Tiefe.
Falsch und feig ist was dort oben sich freut.”



XXII

A YOUNG man whose escapade was recently reported in the newspapers gave as his reason for running away from home that he "wanted to see the world." A common reason; and it reminds me of the great adventure of Pat.

Pat was a water spaniel, growing old with his master in a hamlet on the shore of an inland sea. The steamer touched at this port two or three times a week, and as Pat's master had charge of the dock the dog was always on hand to greet the boat. And with each coming of it, for several years, he tried to ship as a stowaway. The last business transacted before the line was cast off was to haul

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Pat out of the engine room and shoo him ashore. He was not discouraged; it was inevitable that some night his master would forget to whistle for him. The inevitable happened, and Pat's great adventure began.

He wanted to see the world: that was the notion in the back of his shaggy head. The world had come to him, two or three times a week; all sorts and conditions of men and women promenaded the dock while the steamer discharged its freight, and many of them remained to pass a part of the summer on the shore of the inland sea. But the Wanderlust had bewitched Pat, and until he had achieved the grand tour he was not to be satisfied.

When next the steamer nosed against the dock the first passenger to cross the gang-plank was a brown dog, whose face wore the bored expression that one sees at bench shows. "Hello, Pat!" said the master, and Pat saluted briefly with his tail. Then he took up the old round of existence; and though the steamer came two or three times a week and Pat was on the dock, he never again regarded it wistfully or offered to cross the narrow bridge that led to the great wide world.



XXIII

“**T**HE Opera!” What pleasant pictures the phrase brings up! “The Opera” is quite different from “opera” without the definite article, the latter term meaning only an inferior form of musical art; in what degree inferior we need not tarry to consider, since the inferiority is conceded.

The Opera is a brilliant social pageant or kaleidoscope. Light and colour! We think of gleaming pavements, over which clatter spirited carriage-horses (now too few), and of an endless string of motor cars, arriving and departing in a delightful confusion; of wonderful opera cloaks descending from

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these carriages and cars, of flashing jewels and silks and furs; of the light-flooded interior, with the nobility in the boxes, the bourgeoisie on the "main floor," and the sturdy peasantry aloft; of an ensemble as glittering as the courts of fairyland. "Cendrillon" on the stage is no less real (or unreal) than all that which lies on the other side of the footlights.

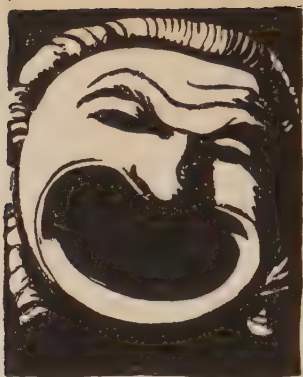
"Cendrillon," "The Barber of Seville," "Haensel and Gretel," "The Marriage of Figaro," even the "Ring"—these are the pieces for the Opera; they fit into its scheme. Utterly out of place, to my notion, are the gloomy, tragical pieces like "Thaïs" and "Gioconda." For we certainly do not go to opera for drama, and as certainly we do not go to it for music; while the little illusion we get we ourselves supply.

What, then, do we go for? Well, some people go because it is fashionable, more go for culture, or culturine. and a minority, which of course includes you and me, go (infrequently) for the enjoyment that the ensemble yields.

If I were contriving an ideal "night at the Opera" I should select a piece like "Rigo-

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letto." No lights should be extinguished during the evening, everybody should be privileged to chatter as much as he pleased, and the curtain should be raised at, say, half-past nine.



XXIV

THERE is a term that painters use which describes a certain thing in literature better than any phrase in the terminology of literary criticism. The word is "pâte." When an artist has built up several layers of paint which he can pull about to his liking, he has a substantial foundation for the effects he may wish to achieve; he has, in short, a pâte. You know the other sort of picture; you feel that if you merely touched it your finger would pass through.

Thus, if we say that a book or a play lacks pâte we express perfectly the thing that is lacking. It is a fatal weakness and unfortu-

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nately we cannot greatly help the young author by pointing it out. Your friend, for example, has written a play. The plot is new, the situations are well contrived, the dialogue is bright. Why, then, do you come away from it with a sense of its futility? Because your friend, with all his contriving, has been unable to do what Ibsen does in a few paragraphs; he has laid his finished colours upon a bare canvas, and you may stick your finger through the picture anywhere.

Practice and years are required for the production of *pâte*, and even these will not bring it if genius or great talent is lacking. Therefore, to tell a man that his work lacks *pâte* is to tell him that it is of no value; yet, having followed the rules, he is at a loss to understand why he has missed greatness. Similarly you may tell a pianist that his playing lacks "quality"—another painter's phrase—and he, too, will be at a loss. His playing is accurate, brilliant, musicianly, but it does not interest you. He knows all the rules of the game, but you remain cold. He does not understand. And you never could make him understand.



XXV

IT was election night, and the query, "What's the latest?" was persistent. A roomful of men were dining leisurely and discussing the bulletins that were received every quarter-hour or so. These returns were more or less interesting evidence of a nation's incapacity for wise self-government. Newsboys were crying "the latest" in the streets. I turned to the man at my left, a scientist of international reputation.

"What *is* the latest? About the stars, I mean. So much that is new is confined to monographs and technical journals, a layman can't keep up with things. We are still getting light rays from suns long since extinct;

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and no doubt I am still believing in hypotheses that were exploded the day before yesterday."

"The latest?" repeated the man of science, stirring his coffee (as the novelist likes to say when the scene is in a dining-room). "Well, the newest notion is that the stars are in two drifts, which are passing through each other at a considerable angle. Singly they are falling in every direction, but each of the two masses has a definite course. It is difficult to picture the thing mentally."

"I can image two swarms of bees," I said. "The spacing is vastly different, but one may picture the swarms. Whither are they swarming?—that I won't ask you. Hitherto the mind has been able to dwell an instant on the black, illimitable space lying beyond our stellar system; but to imagine other swarms in this void, each what we call a universe! ... Other drifts are assumed?"

The scientist nodded. "There is a bee in one of our colonies," he said, "that is thought to have come from one or perhaps many other swarms; I have forgotten the name of it—astronomy is only a side issue with me. The terrific pace at which it is moving has set up

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the interesting question of whence it derived its velocity."

One of the diners rapped on the table. "Gentlemen, another bulletin," he said, and read it aloud. Like the others, it indicated that the human mind—evolution's farthest north on this mustard seed in space—is still in the vegetable state, and that we should not expect a turnip or a squash to reason.



XXVI

“**I** WILL give you an estimate,” said the man. “No,” said Arethusa; “there is a good deal of work to be done in the house, first and last, and naturally you will do this first job at a fair price. Of course, I shall know if you overcharge me, and then I shall not engage you again.” The man hesitated; perhaps he was not sure of himself; there was no way of knowing what his past life had been. “You’d better let me give you an estimate,” he suggested again; but Arethusa shook her head. “I’d rather leave it to your honesty,” said she, and the man weakly assented.

The theory was beautiful, and I felt it

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would be ungenerous to criticize; but when the bill came in the overcharge was so plain that even Arethusa was annoyed. She related the matter to a friend, a lawyer, and she found him singularly unsympathetic. "You are entirely to blame," said he. "The man may have been honest up to the moment you put temptation in his way. Now that you have started him on the downward path there is no telling where he will fetch up—perhaps in the United States Senate."

"It is such a shortsighted policy," Arethusa argues, and there's no denying that; but nothing is commoner in business than shortsightedness. And this is one thing that reconciles us to the disappearance of the small dealer and the growth of the large operator and the department store. We lament the passing of the small dealer; his struggles against an ineluctable fate wring our hearts; and then, because he can see nothing but the immediate dollar, he imposes on us, and we invoke damnation on him and all his tribe.

Whether a man is square in his dealings because he cannot help being honest, or whether he adopts the best policy because he finds it pays, is all one to the consumer. Few of us

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are as soft as Mr. Wellwyn of "The Pigeon"; we resent being targets for imposture. And so when we have our fence painted (and heaven knows it needs painting) I shall invite some mammoth corporation to figure on the job.



XXVII

ANNOUNCEMENT is made of a Little Theatre that is "to create and produce a poetic drama and to promote a full discussion of life and the arts." The plans are attractive and full of promise, and the best luck one can wish the enterprise is that it may not start off handicapped by the blighting appellation "highbrow." The label will be applied, by those that wish the venture well and by those that wish it ill; but if the management disclaim the label and be industrious in getting rid of it, the Little Theatre may become more than a social incident and a season's novelty.

It is a mistake to assume that the approval

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of the pundits of culture is of value in commending an artistic experiment to the consideration of the multitude; the moment such impression is conveyed, that moment the enterprise is on the defensive. It invites and receives the antagonism of the general public and the polite derision of the really cultured minority, whose culture has passed the stage of tea table discussion of matters that, in an enlightened society, are taken for granted.

It is human nature to resent the conscious "uplift" and the air of superiority that surrounds such ventures. If a thing be good it is sufficient to offer it as such or to cry it up as better than something else. Appreciation may be slow in coming, or may not come at all, but at least the enterprise will have a chance to succeed, unimpeded by oracular pronouncements and infusions of Orange-Pekoe culture.



XXVIII

“**I** CAME upon a tall black figure, standing at the edge of the lake,” writes George Moore, describing how he found Yeats by the woods of Coole, “wearing a cloak which fell in straight folds to the knees, looking like a great umbrella forgotten by some picnic party.” And this is but one of many amusing caricatures in which he presents his poet friend. I should like to listen to a debate between Gilbert Chesterton and Bernard Shaw on the subject, “Is George Moore a gentleman?” It would come to nothing, but the arguments would be extremely diverting. I have no reason to suppose that Yeats resents the caricatures in

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"Hail and Farewell." Indeed, as a friend of mine observes, a really civilized man would not resent such things. And we keep in mind that if Moore picks his friends to pieces he does not spare himself.

His latest book has a special interest for writers; that is, for professional writers. Moore makes the distinction brilliantly. "The amateur always puts himself before his work," he says, "and it is only natural that he should do so, for the amateur writes or paints when he has time. When weary of the glory that a title or a motor-car brings him, he writes a book about Shakespeare's Sonnets, or David Cox's slushy water colours, or maybe an appreciation of Napoleon; whereas the artist is interested in the thing itself, and will accept readily a suggestion from any one, if he thinks that it will be to the advantage of the work to do so. Anybody who can improve a sentence of mine by the omission of a comma or by the placing of a comma is looked upon as my dearest friend."

No one appreciates more than the writer who writes in this spirit, the privilege of being taken behind the scenes and shown how the artist achieves his effects. It is instruc-

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tive, for example, to read that Yeats was halted for hours in his composing by the phrase "for his sake," which was inadmissible, because S must never meet S; and illuminating to learn that he feared blank verse because he could write it almost as easily as prose, and that some obstacle, some dam was necessary. One may wonder what obstacle was surmounted in order to achieve—

"The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun."



XXIX

HE who says, "I don't know a thing about music, but I know what I like," speaks truth: his ignorance of music is deep as the pit. Less frank are many subscribers to our Symphony concerts, who, after years of concert-going, still confuse the second movement of one composition with the beginning of another composition; one earnest lady being observed last week, following the program for the succeeding concert. Musicians excepted, few of my acquaintances "know a thing about music." Despite passionate protests and persistent concert-going, music has never interested them; for one cannot be interested in a thing and not learn something

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about it. Music, as Hanslick said, loosens the feet or the heart just as wine loosens the tongue, but such victories testify only to the weakness of the vanquished. My friend might as well say to me, "I am interested in claret," as "I am interested in music." He may be "fond of" music, as he may be fond of claret; but it is not an æsthetic fondness. He may feed records into his phonograph, or he may sit by the fire and sip a whisky toddy: the plane of enjoyment is the same.

Music is the least understood of the arts, and the most difficult art in which to produce anything of value. A child builds a snowman, or models a rude figure in putty, or draws a picture on a slate, or writes a little story; but a child is never observed harmonizing a melody. A person hums la-la-la, and fancies he has "composed" something. With the temerity of ignorance, a person sets down a string of melodies (which a musician afterward "harmonizes") and announces that he has written an opera. Anybody can set down a melody, but only a musician can compose music. It is not the melody which is of value, but the manner in which it is treated—what it becomes beneath the hand of genius. Ber-

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nard Shaw said that Brahms wrote commonplace melodies. But did he compose commonplace music? The melody of one of his loveliest Intermezzi is nothing more than the descending scale of E-flat. What could be more commonplace than a simple scale? What could be lovelier than this Intermezzo in E-flat?

Even genius cannot write music until the art is learned; but fools rush in where genius knows better than to tread. After years of preparation, Brahms began his first symphony, and worked on it for eleven years. And "critics" review this symphony as they would review a warm bath, or a fall on an icy pavement, and mistake their sensations of pleasure or displeasure for an adventure in æsthetics.



XXX

SOMETIMES years do more than modify opinion and taste: they transform an aversion into a delight, or pleasure into tediousness. The other night, finding myself disinclined to pursue a novel I had taken up with considerable expectation, I put it aside and thought, "Each year novel-reading becomes less of a pleasure, and I am sorry, because there are so many novels I have left unread." . . . I took up a volume difficult to hold but not to read, the "Letters of John Lothrop Motley," and in one of these, addressed to Dr. Holmes (himself one of the most charming of correspondents), I presently came upon this: "I

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always find, to my regret, that I grow every year less and less capable of reading novels or romances. I wish it were not so."

The odd part of it is, I am fondest now of a form of literature which I liked least when I was one and twenty—memoirs and letters. As for the epistolary form of fiction—I remember when, having disposed of Fielding and Smollett, I approached Richardson, to sheer off instantly on discovering that "Pamela" was made up of letters. To this day Richardson is unknown to me, and happily will continue so.

In earlier days the story-opening that most quickly enlisted my attention was dialogue, notably the staccato kind; now, I avoid it, preferring a first page composed of a single paragraph. This week I took up "The Lake," assured that if any one could make fiction interesting it was George Moore. It was rather hard going at first, but very soon the narrative took the form of letters; thenceforward my interest did not flag.

Letters from real persons who helped to make the history of the race have come to be, for me, the most absorbing of all printed mat-

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ter, and I regret the hours, fortunately not many, that were given to formal histories, which made little or no impression on my frivolous mind.



XXXI

I LISTENED to a talk on the stars recently. The man of science (among the first in his specialty) declared, half in jest, that he expected his audience to be asleep inside of an hour, but that he would do his best to keep them awake. This attitude of apologetic jocularity may be justified by experience, but I should never take it. Stupidity and blissful ignorance might drop asleep and be hanged to them; they are not worth keeping awake. In the audience alluded to, however, no cases of drowsiness were observed; the lecturer's fears were groundless.

One looks at the heavens more hopefully nowadays, for the new knowledge is a more

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cheering knowledge. The ultimate fate of our planet is a problem that need give no man insomnia, although it is more of a problem than it was a few years ago. We used to believe in the Nebular Hypothesis, i.e. an earth crust that gradually cooled; we used to think that the sun was losing its heat so rapidly that its extinction was, comparatively, not far off in time; we used to believe that the earth was drying up and losing its atmosphere, and that the moon and Mars were depressing examples of what happens to a heavenly body when it loses its vapoury envelope. But we no longer believe these things—that is, those of us who prefer a more plausible hypothesis to a less plausible one, and who are not professionally bound, or influenced, to cling to theories which no longer agree with yesterday's discoveries.

Some of us are interested in the most distant stars, and are pleasantly excited by the suggestion that a certain vast nebula is a stellar system beyond our own. Nearly all of us should be interested in the solar system, our own parish of the infinite, which is so remote from the nearest star that nothing can disturb its clocklike regularity for thousands of years.

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Moreover, the days of our Earth, instead of being numbered, are indefinitely many. It started without an atmosphere; when it grew large enough to hold an atmosphere it acquired one, and will continue to hold it; it never had a "crust"; it isn't cooling, it isn't wearing away, but is growing bigger and stronger with every revolution around the sun. It is a grand old Earth, the best of all possible planets, and we are only beginning to realize how extremely interesting it may be to its inhabitants.



XXXII

THE poet Pope averred, from insufficient data, that order is Heaven's first law. Doubt has been raised by the observation and computation of modern science; there is no semblance of order in the universe considered as a whole. Star-drift is a something unaccounted for by the watchers of the skies; they merely know that certain masses of stars are drifting towards one point of the celestial compass, and certain other masses toward another. Aside from these large general motions, helter-skelter seems the law of Cosmos, though to our eyes the plunging suns are as fixed as jewels in a kingly crown.

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It is only when we accept the evidence of vision, and especially when we consider our own "parish of the infinite," the solar system, that the pronouncement of the poet seems justified. Here is order, recurrence of familiar phenomena year upon year, century upon century. Here is unbroken serenity, and absolute rhythm, and perfect poise—object lessons that have gone for little with earthlings, who create all there is of disorder within the planetary pale. Reserve and poise are characteristics of the Great Artist of the universe; and equally they are characteristics of the great artists of Earth.

Poise, reserve, restraint, deliberate suppression of a striking detail in order to preserve the harmony of the whole—these are the last things appreciated in any of the fine arts. There are few things more depressing, for example, than to sit in a concert hall and sense the unappreciation of the majority for artistic reserve, and to listen to their comment at the close; and if one harbour the notion of writing for the stage, a speedy cure may be effected (if desired) by contriving to listen to the criticism of the boxes (or the balconies). Our culture is nine-tenths sham; it is superimposed

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on ignorance of fundamentals. A few understand; and it is for these few that the true artist (and possibly the Creator) labours and is content.



XXXIII

IN speaking of his achievements in concrete furniture, Mr. Edison mentions "tables you could not distinguish from a Sheraton"—an incomplete assurance, since the viewing distance is not given. At a distance of, say, one hundred yards, an Edison table might bear a superficial resemblance to a Sheraton piece, but at close range it could only imitate, more or less faithfully, the lines of Sheraton.

The lines are the chief charm of the product of Heppelwhite, Sheraton, and Chippendale, and their contemporaries who followed the models of the masters, but of almost equal charm are the tones in the woods that went

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into their pieces, now mellowed by more than a hundred years of air and sunlight. In the room in which I am writing this there is a table of English walnut. It is very old, very lovely in line and colour, and as delightful to an appreciative eye as a beautiful painting. Mr. Edison could no more imitate this piece than he could match a Stradivarius with a fiddle cast in concrete.

The taste for antique furniture which is something more than old, is not common, especially beyond the borders of New England. We used to exhibit our "finds" with much enthusiasm, but the merely polite interest which they evoke discouraged us, so we no longer fatigue acquaintances with the history of this delectable sideboard, or this remarkable tall clock, or that miraculous chair. And having passed beyond the borders of New England, we are no longer pleasantly excited by a telephoned communication that our friend E— has finally got a trace of eight Heppelwhite dining room chairs in perfect condition, or that our friend P— has located a block-front dresser in a neighbouring village and that he is going to drive over to examine

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it in the morning, and "if we would like to go along he will call for us."

Antique furniture shops are repositories of junk; most of the things in them are merely old, and age never redeemed the ugly or the commonplace. But a really fine piece of furniture, built in the golden age, is as beautiful to my eye as anything painted on canvas and hung on a wall, and I am sorry that these artists who wrought in woods did not make a practice of signing their work.



XXXIV

THERE is nothing like a New Year's Resolution. It sets the soul and body in a glow: the consciousness of inward grace warms one, if only for a day. It is not gracious to suggest reformation to one's neighbour; the most I may do is to mention a resolution of my own and intimate that it might be emulated with profit. And this resolution is that, during the coming twelve-month, I shall be satisfied only with the best, and when that best is not obtainable I shall go without.

If you will pardon the direct address, let the few or many concerts that you hear be good ones. When no worthy plays are to be

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seen, wait until there are. If you are moved to look at pictures, familiarize yourself with the accessible masterpieces before considering lesser canvases. In your social intercourse, court the society of your intellectual superiors; if these are not to be come at you may fall back upon books—the best society in the world. I do not direct these remarks to the blissful multitude, who are satisfied with mediocrity and worse, and are bored or made restless when a higher note is sounded; these have been, and will be, the majority; art does not exist for them, nor they for art. I address persons like myself, who know the good from the bad, yet exhibit toward mediocrity an amiable and foolish tolerance, the certain outcome of which is a lowering of ideals and a degradation of taste, with a recurring irritation over a wasted day or evening. Few things are more discomposing to a decently-ordered mind. If understanding and appreciation of good music were born in one, instead of arrived at by a continuous process of refining; if one “could tell undoubted Raphaels from Gerard Dows and Zoffanies” without acquiring a taste for masterpieces; if one understood

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and appreciated by instinct the best in all the arts, and good taste did not require constant cultivating and nourishing—one might suffer to come in contact with the pitch of mediocrity and escape defilement; but such is not the case. Good taste is come at, and maintained, by a rigid exclusion of the trivial and the mediocre. And to relax the austerity of our standards is to invite impairment of them. Therefore, let the watchword for the new year be Intolerance. Or, if that be too strong a word, let us say Non-tolerance.



XXXV

LAST Saturday I went to see "Pomander Walk," a comedy by Mr. Louis Parker, and I confess that it gave me a great deal of pleasure. I say confess, because some of my highly intellectualized friends rather sneer at it; it falls short of their admirable standards, and the ending is a bit too sugary. It is all right to have a play end on a major triad, but why leave all the characters deliriously happy? There is enough happiness in real life; why flaunt it in the playhouse? I agree to that, and to anything else you please, yet I found pleasure in "Pomander Walk" because its atmosphere is the atmosphere of "Cranford" and "Pride

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and Prejudice," and everybody who is fond of Mrs. Gaskell and Jane Austen is almost certain to like Mr. Parker's comedy.

To get something out of a play one must take something to it. I don't know what the much-pleased people around me brought, but my proffered sympathy was a sentimental interest in sequestered lanes, and old gardens, and print curtains, and box hedges, and Kate Greenaway pictures, and other things of that sort. Yes, Mr. Parker has created atmosphere. He has even gone so far as to have one of his characters say, "Somebody has broken their word," an atrocious locution to which the delightful Mrs. Gaskell and the admirable Miss Austen were much given. But these writers were not creating atmosphere, for sometimes they wrote "his" and sometimes "their."

Whenever I go to the theatre it solaces me to reflect that I am not present in a critical capacity. I can agree with the professional playgoer upon the shortcomings of a play and the demerits of its performance, and still, in spite of everything, I can sometimes have a very good time. This is my limitation. The limitation of the critic, the good critic, is that he can't.



XXXVI

TOO sleepy to read longer, I closed one of the most delightful of books, "Mansfield Park," and fell asleep thinking how much more mad this world would be if it lacked the sanctuaries which genius provides. If I read nothing for a fortnight save newspapers and magazines, if I hear no music of importance, and waste an evening or two on bad or indifferent plays, my mind becomes as restless as a gull; I am dissatisfied with everything and everybody, especially myself; I feel that I have wasted a fortnight of the years that remain for me, and every tick of the tall clock is a rebuke. I ascribe the irritability of my friend G—, and the hypochondria of

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my friend H—, to the fact that they, too, are reading nothing more solid than newspapers and periodicals and the novels of second-rate authors; their minds, like mine, have slipped their moorings. After a week or two of tossing about I, for one, get back to my anchorage. I have no doubt that Mr. Tarkington's "Turmoil" is a good piece of writing, but when my mind is in a turmoil it seeks a haven in the pages of Jane Austen, or Henry Fielding, or George Meredith, or Thomas Hardy. And this, so far as I am concerned, answers the question recently propounded in an English magazine, "Is there any use or merit of any kind in culture?" Culture is as indispensable as oxygen. Culture is a fact, not a matter of opinion, precisely as the discoveries of science are facts. It is no less certain that Bach was the greatest composer who ever lived than that Canopus is a larger sun than ours. It takes longer to establish a fact in art than in celestial physics, but, once established, it is little likely to be disturbed. I am not able to conceive of a world without the things which culture represents. And were I deprived of them for any considerable

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time I am very sure that I should fall into
the mental state of the slaves of nicotine just
before they

“Go mad and beat their wives;
Plunge (after shocking lives)
Razors and carving knives
Into their gizzards.”



XXXVII

“**W**HAT do you read these days?” I asked; and one woman, who lives twenty minutes from the Loop, replied: “Nothing, except the newspaper. I watch a twelve-foot box of flowers grow and blossom into beauty—petunias, phlox, geraniums, pansies and sweet alyssium. I look at the oaks and elms in a neighbour’s yard, and dream of the big open spaces.”

A pleasant way to dissipate the hours, but a bit difficult for most who dwell in city streets, even where the din of traffic echoes only faintly. Northward along the lake’s shore it is easy, as I know, to sit with folded hands and look at the flowers, and birds, and

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the infrequent smoke or sail that breaks the lake's blue field. The hours slip by unreckoned, and the book lies, with leaves uncut, on the porch table. Birds will stand a great deal of watching, and fortunately the intimacy they establish never becomes close enough to grow tedious; the boldest are the shyest; their instinct serves them better, in this respect, than that of humans.

Nailed to a post is a box in which we put scraps of bread and crackers; and fur and feather were not long in marking this and coming to it regularly. Among the first was the oriole, who on his second visit was accompanied by his family. The three young ones were established on a limb above the box, and presently were stuffed to the semblance of tennis balls. Comes hither, also, the jay and the thrasher, the woodpecker and the wren, and the songful catbird. A grey squirrel sprawls in the basket and eats his fill, while the birds gather and voice disapproval of his gluttony; and I am reminded of the nonsense rhyme—

"If this should stay to dine," said he,
"There won't be much for us."

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But one must read something, and I find that my correspondents, like myself, have recourse to the classics. Seemingly the nearer one is to the struggle in Europe, the farther back he goes for his reading; thus Frederic Harrison is pondering the old Romans and Greeks in the originals; but for us, more happily circumstanced, Gilbert Murray does very well, and Hardy, and Thackeray, and their contemporaries. Even in featherweight literature one may renew old acquaintances. Yesterday I took home "The Leavenworth Case."



XXXVIII

A LITTLE book by John Cotton Dana, entitled "Reasons for Reading," prompted me to ask myself what might be *my* ultimate reason, and I answered that reading is the alternative to the "bare bodkin" of Hamlet's monologue; books are a refuge from insufferable boredom. And yet—how many books do I read in a year? How many do *you* read? It is true that leisure for reading is not thrust upon one whose days are actively employed, but it is equally true that almost any one can *take* time to read. It is easy to drop into the habit, and as easy to drop out. A sieve will hold water as readily as the

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familiar excuse, "I can't find time to read."

The doorbell rang as I was about to leave the house; a young man had called to make some small repairs on the telephone. As no one else was at home, I had either to ask him to call at another time or to wait while he dispatched his work, and I elected to wait. On the table lay a thin volume which I had bought three months before, intending to read it at once, but I had not "found the time." Here was an opportunity, so I began cutting the pages. In twenty minutes the telephone was repaired and my book was finished, and I had learned one or two things that I might have acquired three months earlier. In our daily lives there are many such twenty minutes—vacant periods that go unimproved. If you were to place a book here and a book there, and carry a small one in your pocket, you would get through much reading in a twelvemonth. Instead of pacing the hall and fretting because your wife is ten minutes late in starting for the theatre, pick up the nearest of the books that you have laid out to read, and your ten minutes and your temper will be improved.

Ah, if one could do this whenever boredom

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plucks him by the buttonhole! If one could have recourse to Lamb or Hazlitt when the play becomes tedious; if one could open the Confessions of St. Augustine when one is backed into a corner and compelled to listen to matter of no consequence; if one could fish out Mr. Trevelyan's latest book of essays when the lady dining at the left avers that she doesn't understand music, but she knows what she likes—one might contemplate a prolonged existence without a qualifying yawn. But we have made a virtue of politeness, and we must bear the afflicting consequences.



XXXIX

REFERENCE is made now and then to "the lost art of conversation," which, like so many lost things, may have been invented by the Chinese. Good talk was rare in all ages. If conversation generally was better in the long ago it was because the persons who gathered at tables and in drawing-rooms were interested in things, which seems not to be the case at present. So many dinners and teas are deadly nowadays because so few persons appear to know what is going on in the world, or are familiar with the past achievements of the intellect and the dauntless soul of man. For example, if the topic

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of the table chatter should chance to be personality (instead of the usual personalities), and one should remark that Hegel was among the least attractive of famous men, somebody might inquire, as "General Mitchener" queried, "Who's Hegel?" Naturally there are exceptions. *Your* dinner parties, Madam, are always delightful, and *You*, Sir, are that rare animal, a good listener.

Good listeners are rare because there is so little talk that is worth listening to; and the customary flow of banalities has imposed silence upon many men who *can* talk well. These have become crustaceous, and are to be coaxed from their shells only when a sympathetic audience is assured. Occasionally you will find a good talker who is not discouraged by blank countenances or indifferent, and it will be remarked of him that "Mr. So-and-So has an amazing fund of information." And all he may have discoursed of was some elementary fact in biology, or some recent theories or discoveries in celestial physics.

We are as wrapped up in the small affairs of Earth as the inhabitants of a small suburb

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are absorbed in their suburban trivialities. We are more interested in the latest opera than in the music of spheres, more taken with the tango than the dance of the atoms, more excited by the coming of a new actress than by the coming of a new comet. Science, which has taught us all we know, appeals to the few. In his first and best book Mr. Chesterton observes that in the early days of the world the discovery of a fact of natural history was immediately followed by the realization of it as a fact of poetry, and he wonders to what towering heights of poetic imagery we might have risen if the poetizing of natural history had continued, and man's fancy had played with the planets as naturally as it once played with the flowers.

Our poets still are playing with flowers, and are less concerned with the flowers themselves than with the manner of arranging them in bouquets. If I were a poet, I think I should sing, not of October woods and April fields and daisies, but of that wonderful moment of eternity when, in the sea water that surged soundlessly against the primal rocks of our planet, the first life-cell was born.



XL

PREPARED to be amazed, we seated ourselves in the darkened clubroom, while the professor of celestial physics made ready to communicate, by word and chart, some hint of the universe's marvels. Food for amazement there was in plenty, fed to us with a spoon; for the lecturer, realizing how limited was our comprehension, translated bulks, weights, and interstellar spaces into terms that might be most easily grasped. There was no questioning his statements: you knew he did not exaggerate. As W. H. Hudson has said, a scientist does not exaggerate; if he did he would not be a scientist. (So much truth a mind of

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the first order can pack in a single sentence.) It ought to be possible to say this as truly of newspaper reporters as of Nature's. To twist a Chesterton epigram, there are no uninteresting news stories; there are only uninterested reporters.

I shared the general amazement, but felt no accompanying thrill. When one deliberately induces a receptive mood, the reception extended to the thing invited is cool. We make, as another naturalist has said, "a dead set at it," and we miss the quiver of excitement which the revelation of the unexpected brings. The poet's heart leaped up when he beheld a rainbow in the sky, because the arch was a sudden apparition, though a familiar phenomenon. One makes a journey to Niagara, and regards the mighty torrent calmly; whereas a wilderness waterfall unexpectedly revealed, or a white-throat's song shattering the twilight hush of woods, has a power to make the heart leap up which is denied to the anticipated, however wonderful, however beautiful.

And so it was that I listened unthrilled to an amazing tale of star-dust, of the death of old worlds and the birth of new, of things un-

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dreamt of in the philosophy of Galileo. And so it was that I had my thrill hours afterward, walking homeward through the quiet streets. As I turned a corner I suddenly raised my eyes, and saw, as if for the first time swinging low above the lake, the golden crescent of the waning moon.



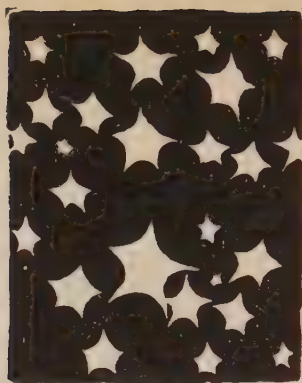
XLI

A MAN lives two existences, the one emotional, imaginative, the other matter of fact. They are best kept separate, if one values peace of mind. These two existences are as like as moonlight and sunlight, and as unlike. On a silvered night in Spring, when the warm south stirs the greening boughs and the earth exhales its pungent odours, the world seems a very beautiful place; by daylight it is quite another matter. "*On souffre*," wrote Anatole France, in an essay on that sad mortal, Jules Tellier, "*on souffre plus que de raison de la médiocrité des hommes et de la monotonie des choses. On regarde la nature avec des yeux mornes et*

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vides, comme au lendemain de l'ivresse. On ne voit plus la beauté du monde, parce qu'on a épuisé dans le rêve le trésor des illusions, qui est notre meilleure richesse."

There's the trick. To be able to look the daylight world in the face without inquietude; to see it steadily and to see it as it is, in whole or in part; not to despair of it, nor to hope much for it; above all, not to let its incurable meanness and stupidity empoison the moonlit life of the mind—there is the road to the kingdom of Ataraxia, where one may preserve his treasure of illusions, unvexed by the monotony of things and the mediocrity of man.



XLII

ONE'S earliest recollection of Decoration Day, very dim, is having been taken to Greenwood Cemetery, in Brooklyn. There were the little flags, and the wreaths, and the strewn flowers; things interesting, without being melancholy, to a child not yet prey to introspection. There is recollection, later, of men in blue marching through city streets, sometimes under rain. The ranks were well filled then, and were not soon thinned. The father of the house, himself a naval veteran, did not march in those days. Although persuaded to join a Grand Army post, he went but rarely to its campfires. The "big talk," as he called it,

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annoyed or bored him. But with the years his interest grew, until at last the Post became his chief pleasure. He became Commander in his turn, and it was the Post that buried him, according to his wish. Summoned from afar, one discussed the details of these military obsequies with the recording secretary, in the back of a dingy drugstore. One felt curiously remote. It is not easy to slip back into an environment departed from early.

Decoration Day, devoted to oratory and rosemary, became more and more a bank holiday. Man was made to mourn, but briefly. His capacity for impersonal grief is limited to a few perfunctory gestures. And so, as the ranks of the veterans thinned, the sentiment inspired by their deeds thinned also. Had not those who tarried trimmed the lamp of remembrance, it might have been extinguished in a gust of holiday laughter. But they have kept it trimmed, and by its clear flame we still read the story of a stern duty faithfully performed.

And now another lamp has been lighted, and its rays stream upon another memorable

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page of history. This lamp, also, will be kept trimmed by the few who do not forget. If the American graves in France could speak, what would they ask of us? That "we here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain." To voice such thoughts in enduring phrases a Lincoln is required. A few words, if they are the right ones, move all hearts, hearts that are slow to emotion as well as those that are always bathed in it.

"It comes equally to us all, and makes us all equal when it comes," wrote Donne. "The ashes of an oak in the chimney are no epitaph of that oak, to tell me how high or how large it was; it tells me not what flocks it sheltered while it stood, nor what men it hurt when it fell. The dust of great persons' graves is speechless, too; it says nothing, it distinguishes nothing. As soon the dust of a wretch whom thou wouldest not, as of a Prince whom thou couldest not look upon, will trouble thine eyes, if the wind blow it thither; and when a whirlwind hath blown the dust of the churchyard into the Church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the

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Church into the churchyard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, This is the patrician, this is the noble flour, and this the yeomanly, this the plebeian bran."

Enduring phrases, framed by great souls, give us the courage to die, and no less the courage to live. Many messages are needed, for what is A's support is no prop for B, and what B holds sacred brings only a smile to C. The idea of immorality sustains and soothes one man, while another finds tranquillity in the thought of extinction. Addison seemed uncertain: "Eternity, thou pleasing, dreadful thought!"



XLIII

ONE finds the following in "A Last Diary," by Barbellion:

"Christmas Day, 1918— Surely, I muse, a man cannot be accounted a failure who succeeds at last in calling in all his idle desires and wandering motives, and with utter restfulness concentrating his life on the benison of Death. I am happy to think that, like a pilot hard aport, Death is ready at a signal to conduct me over this moaning bar to still deep waters. After four years of war, life has grown cheap and ugly, and Death—how desirable and sweet! Youth now is in love with Death, and many are heavy hearted because Death flouts their affection—the

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maimed, the halt, and blind. How terrible if life had no end!"

With this we may compare Bacon:

"Death arrives graciously only to such as sit in darkness, or lie heavy burthened with grief and irons; to the poor Christian that sits bound in the galley; to despairful widows, pensive prisoners, and deposed kings; to them whose fortune runs back, and whose spirits mutiny—unto such death is a redeemer, and the grave a place for retiredness and rest.

"These wait upon the shore of death, and waft unto him to draw near, wishing above all others to see his star that they might be led to his place; wooing the remorseless sisters to wind down the watch of their life, and to break them off before the hour."

The genius of English literature has ever been preoccupied with the subject of death, and one might go on to quote passages of great beauty and nobility—very fitting reading for this Memorial Day.

A poem dear to many, and, as was happily recalled, to the naval veteran to whom reference has been made, was Stevenson's "Re-

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quiem." The last two lines were graven on the headstone of the narrow house:

"Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.



XLIV

AS the night falls, the Pleiad sisters quiver palely forth, leading a train of the most brilliant of the constellations. Summer is over and gone; her dead leaves fly before the "breath of Autumn's being." It is the fashion to be pensive at this season, and the poets have followed the fashion. Here and there will be found one—Henley, for example—whose feeling is more than melancholy. Autumn is "the Dead March of the year." The rain and the wind, the wind and the rain, wretched skies, sodden leas—these things seem to have dampened his spirit. Yet who has sung of Death in braver, wiser words?

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Hence, loathed Melancholy! I would not be pensive even (as many are) for literary purposes; for to me the notes of the Dead March of the year are as agreeable as the wild music of Spring's bacchanal. And so I am not aghast, as perhaps I should be, because six nations are marching to the music of the Dead March, and the tread of the war god shakes a continent.

Whence comes the longing after Permanence? Why, my friend, does the destruction of a far off city so concern you? Is it because, perhaps, you own a house and a bit of a garden, and a motor car, and think that because these things are they always should be? Is the tangible of more value than the intangible? Are cathedrals and palaces more to be treasured than the ideas of freedom and justice?

We look out on the universe and observe perpetual flux. "Impermanence" is written across the heavens. Our sun is breaking down, in the chemist's phrase, yet we despair because half a dozen ant-hills on our globe are ravaged by war. Elements, once supposed to be indestructible, are breaking down, yet we lament because a shell has wrecked the stained glass window of a cathedral.

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Comets and cathedrals, Pleiades and palaces, planets and picture galleries—these seem all one to me as I walk homeward under the quiet October sky, and look up suddenly to see Aldebaran, a red star, a star that has grown old. Nothing endures. But why should that be cause for melancholy?



XLV

THE oddest letter in a mail that brings many odd letters came to hand a few days ago. It was written in pencil, on the stationery of a Kansas hotel, and the name signed was unfamiliar; but the writer mentioned that he had sent many squibs to me under different aliases. "But no more," he added. "The Doctor says I shan't live till morning."

Along with this communication was another from the nurse, relating that the young man had died that evening from injuries received in a wreck. His request had been that the pencilled note be forwarded. "For he said," wrote the nurse, "that you would surely

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have a tear for one who had contributed so many things to your column." To withhold that passing tribute one must be unemotional indeed. Would that a farewell might have accompanied it!

A strange letter, but a note of depression was not in it: instead, a fine tone of resignation. The writer had "lived by the way," and had known the lights and the shadows, and had found it a good way. There was no resentment, no complaint, beyond the line, "It is hard to go at thirty." And it is hard to go at thirty. It is not so hard at forty, and it becomes less hard as the seasons pass in their cycles, and dissolution loses, for most of us, its early terrors. He who has ordered his life well may repeat, and believe while repeating, those fine lines of Henley's:

"A summer night descending cool and green
And dark on daytime's dust and stress and heat;
The ways of Death are soothing and serene,
And all the words of Death are grave and sweet."



XLVI

WHEN I am bidden to the journey through the Narrow Vale, I hope the message will come, not in the summer, but in the spring, the season of birth in death. The idea of Resurrection was man's greatest inspiration—a divine inspiration, if you wish. The idea has never lost its freshness, though the phrases we use to describe it are worn to the threads. As we sit in the darkened room, and the preacher reads the service for the dead, we feel the triteness of the phrases and listen with a casual ear; but the idea of Resurrection takes entire possession of our thoughts, to which the preacher's words are but a droning accompaniment.

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When we are very young Death seems a dreadful thing, not to be dwelt upon; when it comes into the mind it is hurriedly thrust out again. But life is one long process of getting tired, as Samuel Butler said, and midway of the process we cease to regard Death as the fantastical figure in the morality play and come to think of him as a grave and sweet companion, whose hand we shall not shrink from when it is laid upon our arm. And if it is spring when we go with others to a graveside, the birth in death that is all about us tempers the sadness of the hour. The green of the turf is deepening, life is coursing through the stark limbs of the trees; if there come a flaw of rain, each drop means life to a seed that waits the moisture. It is a kindly earth to which the loved friend is committed—the great mother who was never far from George Meredith's thoughts.

“And we go,
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
Even we,
Even so.”

In the evening I sat in another darkened room; but in the next was light, and music—music that breathed of spring. A window

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was partly open, and through it came the smell of wet earth, and a warm rain splashed on the pane. A vernal night, cool and fragrant, descended on daytime's dust and stress and heat.

"This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

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Footnotes to Baedeker

California

I

ALTHOUGH a German and a prolific writer of books of travel, our excellent friend Karl Baedeker never permits himself to philosophize upon the restless sons of earth who do not seem to know when they are well off at home, but must go knocking about from Badstein to worse, purchasing discomfort with the money that should have been put aside for rainy weather. Being a German, Karl must occasionally

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philosophize to himself, for he has observed the inns of Germany swarming with native graduates; and these have, on the average, less money to waste than the American gadder. But in his literary output, Karl sticks as close to the facts of travel as he can get, indicating, with single and double stars, the comparatives and superlatives of natural scenery, the monuments of man, and (most important) the places where man may eat and lay his head. Many of these places turn out to be ill-starred, but in the main Karl is to be relied on. Travellers, writing to the beloved ones at home, might use this starring system to advantage. For example: "Arrived this morning at * Naples; went to a ** restaurant and ordered a bottle of *** wine and some ***** ham and eggs.

.
Why do people leave home, like Lord Bateman, "strange countries for to see"? That is, after they have attained to years of discretion. Philosophers, from Epictetus to Emerson, have deprecated globe-trotting. "For," said the former, "thou art not come into this world to choose out its pleasanter places, but to dwell in those where thou wast

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born, and wherof thou was appointed to be a citizen." And one of a race of globe trotters put the matter pithily, when he remarked: "Ay, now I am in Arden; the more fool I. When I was at home, I was in a better place. But travellers must be content." If not content, then resigned.

The desire to gad diminishes with years, but whether because one grows wiser or more indolent and comfort-loving who shall say?

From the Bible on, there must be many interesting allusions in literature to the gadding habit, and I wish that some one more industrious than myself would collect them. There was, for example, Naaman, who had certain opinions about making an expedition to the Jordan merely for the bathing to be had there. And there was the Roman gentleman in the days of Lucretius who could find comfort neither in his town house nor at his suburban villa, but spent his time dashing madly from one to the other.

But to return to my friend, Karl Baedeker, to the annotation of whose deathless works I have dedicated my declining years: apparently his notion of nothing in particular to see is the stretch of country between Chicago

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and Utah, for after leaving the brilliant constellation Chicago (composed of such luminaries as the * Auditorium, * Hull House, etc.) one does not observe another star until Echo Cañon is reached. The fourteen hundred odd miles between are an interstellar void, rayless as the Coal Sack near the Southern Cross, which no telescope ever has plumbed.

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Decidedly there is little to see from the tail end of the Overland Limited after seven P. M. Fast fade the glimmering suburbs, and presently even the lights of the semaphores vanish in the dusty wake. During the whirl across Illinois the dust is just this side of intolerable. It sifts unceasingly through every screen and crack. It is only a trifle more so on the observation platform, so we hold seats there until the Mississippi is crossed—the merest glimpse of whose waters is obtainable. As to sleeping, one may open the window and be choked to death or close it and be asphyxiated. Or there is the oasis in the observation car where strong men, despairing of rain, are laying the dust with the stuff that makes cities famous.

The commercial and social adventures of

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Messrs. Potash and Perlmutter make up one of the popular books of the hour. In their construction, no doubt, a certain amount of invention was required from Mr. Glass; but I suspect that for the bulk of his material he merely had to sit around and listen. I happened along in the oasis just when Mr. Potash confides to Mr. Perlmutter the comparative uselessness of a daughter as against a son.

"Her mother, Mawruss, is very strict with her, y'understand; makes her to practise it four hours a day—not all at once, y'understand. Now, I like ragtime; but do I get it? Nix, Mawruss. After dinner I say, 'Play me it something, Minnie,' and she plays it a sonata. I want ragtime, y'understand, but she says, 'Fader, that is rot.' And her mother backs her up. What's the use, Mawruss? If I had got it a son I could make something out of him."

The colloquy relapses into a discussion of "the business." The other gentlemen who are laying the dust also are discussing business. Apparently nobody has left his occupation at home. "We change our skies but not our souls," remarks that popular Latin, Mr. Q. H. Flaccus.



II

LIKE the Democratic party, we are a long time getting out of Nebraska. The landscape is a trifle monotonous, but it is pleasant to look at to-day, because it is drenched with rain. Considerable rain, we assume, as the Platte river has an inch or two of water in it. A few days ago it was as dry as a paprika factory. It seems that the people above have diverted the usual flow of the river for irrigating purposes. With a river it is a case of first come first served.

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We miss the Rocky Mountains, as we cross the divide in the night. Morning finds us running through what Baedeker terms "rug-

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ged, hilly scenery"; the porter person calls it "rough country." This part of the trip is especially illuminating to one who has never seen it before. Hereafter, when I read tales of the plains written by Eastern authors, I shall be able better to visualize the *mise-en-scène*. The landscape is interestingly monotonous or monotonously interesting. The "frolic architecture" of the eroding winds and snows is particularly fine. I expected to find picturesque persons on ponies scattered along the way, but I saw only one during the entire journey across Wyoming, and he was within lariat distance of a saloon.

I have committed myself to the opinion that man in the mass is more pleasant to look upon than woman. I wish to record an exception. A crowd of men sitting in their suspenders in a smoking car is one of the most depressing sights on the highways of the world.

There is nothing exclusive about a Pullman. In one of the coaches an unshaven gentleman sans coat and collar, is sitting with his feet in the seat opposite playing an accordion and crooning softly to himself.

There is poetry in every one of us.

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We are crossing Salt Lake, whose heavy Lethean waters the fast dropping sun is tinting with reds and gold. Deep purples wrap the circling hills. Divinest harmony, the horizon's rim around. "They ought to have music on these trains," a woman remarked to her companion; "a piano, or a vitriola, or something. It would be just fine."

There seems to be a general disposition among the passengers to consign to the Oubliette the person who picks out the choice seat on the observation platform and sits there all day reading a novel, without once lifting his eyes to the scenic panorama. There is so little practical difference between selfishness and thoughtlessness that it does not matter what you choose to call it.

We arise at sun-up to have a look at the "red blooded men" of Reno, but evidently they, like the divorcées, sleep late. There is no one about except a few Italians and a fringe of sunburnt loungers.

"Many snowsheds are passed," reports Mr. Baedeker. I desire to footnote that Karl states the matter correctly and conservatively. Many snowsheds are indeed passed—about

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forty miles of them. They serve the double purpose of screening the tracks in winter and the scenery the year round. Through the latticed outer walls of the sheds we get kodak glimpses of ravishing pictures, and we wish we were tramping the brown wagon road below. The only way to see the world is on foot.

Wonderful vistas stir one's emotions while crossing the Sierras; and a good share of my interest is taken up in admiring engineering skill that almost every mile of the way bears witness to. I suppose I shall continue to regret that I was not born with a "head for figures," else I might have been a civil engineer. To negotiate the bunkers and hazards that nature has set up on her fair green has always seemed to me the most interesting game in the world.

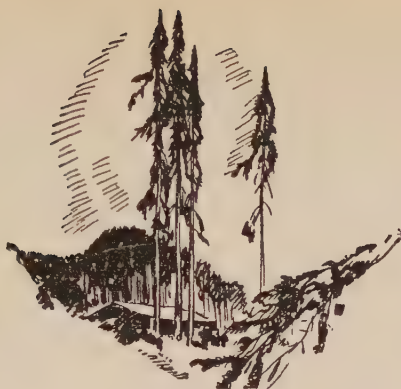
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Sign on the ferry boat from Benica to Port Costa: "Life-preservers in the wine-room."

I asked Augustus, the porter person, what in his many years of travel he had found to be the favourite foolish question. He pon-

The East Window

dered a bit and replied: "Well, when the train stops at a station the women come out to me and say, "Porter, is the train going to stop here?"



III

IT is surprising how few people, comparatively, are acquainted with Karl Baedeker's masterpiece, "The United States." Many who are familiar with his "Italy," "Switzerland," etc., have never dipped into the fascinating pages of his most romantic work. Our friends in San Francisco are now reading the dozen pages that he devotes to their remarkable city, and are acquiring more than one bit of information previously unapprehended. Karl's system of starring is a convenient way to express one's admiration of this and that. Example: There is a charming little Swedenborgian church in San Francisco, which contains, besides some fine paintings by

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William Keith, a * stained glass window by Bruce Porter. Talking with the pastor, an elderly man, shyly cordial, we remarked that the window was starred in Baedeker. It pleased him. Visitors usually have to fall back on "beautiful," "lovely," "how artistic," and other conventional terms of appreciation.

One of the things about this church that Karl does not mention is a delectable garden, with a little fountain for the birds to bathe in; and another is the open wood fire that lends to the interior an air of domesticity. The Puritans would have frowned on this. Their notion of "mother" church was quite different.

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In the East one talks about the weather; on the coast one discusses, *ad infin.*, the climate—long known as "the Glorious Climate of California." Although Karl does not double-star it, he mentions that "the climate of California is wonderfully equable." I am requested to correct the notion, which seems to be pretty general among Easterners, that this remarkable climate is automatic; that on a given day of the year certain mete-

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orological phenomena are inevitable. Within the limits of its variation the G. C. of S. F. fluctuates as any other climate fluctuates. On August 22 of 1911 there may be twice as much fog and raw air blowing in from the ocean as there is in motion on this August 22; and the February nine of one year may be as different from the February nine of another year as madura is different from Colorado madura. But taking it by and large, around and around, Centigrade and Fahrenheit, the G. C. of S. F. is well up to its advance notices; and if one had nothing else to think about, contemplation of its perennial balminess might profitably engage one's time.

Our first view of the Pacific was unlike that accorded to the adventurer who stood "silent upon a peak in Darien." We were sped in an automobile after nightfall, to the Cliff house; entering this, we approached a window to look out on the moonlit ocean. "One moment, please," interposed an attendant. Chairs were placed at the window and the lights in the room were extinguished. And while we looked down on the white smother of breakers, a mandolin tinkled in an adjoining room, and a fair singer—only

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fair—warbled something about moonlight on the waters. It was very “nice and affable.” as Charles, the waiter, says; but I should have preferred Darien.

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Then there is * Tamalpais. Every visitor to the coast should go there, and probably does. The height of the mountain is less than three thousand feet, but as it begins near sea level the effect is that of a much loftier peak. A fussy little engine with most of its works outside snakes us up eight crooked miles and stops, panting, in front of an inn that is almost tip-top—in elevation, appointments and cuisine. The topmost crag is surmountable by an observatory, from which Captain Breitfelt sights incoming vessels, and reports them to the esteemed *Examiner*. The Captain is good company. He relates most interestingly how the late unpleasantness (referred to here as the “Fire”) shook up his eyrie and scattered his tools all over the place. There may be better views of our planet than that obtainable from the observatory, but this does very well. Karl stars it.

Assuredly nothing could surpass the sunrise that we saw. Ideal conditions were pres-

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ent. An unbroken expanse of clouds rose nearly to our feet; we seemed to inhabit an islet in an illimitable sea, silent as the frozen fields around the Poles. Presently a part of this grey sea began to gild; it turned pure gold, that shimmered along the diaphanous waves of vapour. Then the arc of the sun broke through.

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There are trails and trails. Those that mark these Western mountains are unlike those of the northland with which I am familiar. In the forest there is either a trail or there isn't; and if there isn't, one can travel without one. Here one essays a path through the low brush, which presently multiplies into a likeness of the veins on one's palms and, although the goal is in sight below, it might as well be a hundred miles away. I undertook to walk from the summit to Muir Woods, but, missing the trail half way down, I became entangled in a devil's labyrinth of scrub oak, manzanita, and madrona, compared with which an elder thicket is as yielding as maiden-hair fern. After fussing around in this stuff for an hour or two, I had to hunt the back trail and then take a seven mile hike

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down the railway. It was dusty and blazing hot on the mountain. I reached Muir Inn as travel-stained as if I had been packing a week through the wilderness; but in the cabin that had been assigned to us I found something that one does not meet up with at the end of the average trail—a shower-bath! As the pipes lay outdoors, they had been heated by the sun, and the shower ran hot water! It was really absurd.

The * Muir Woods exhibit nature in one of her happiest moods. The redwoods are not so wide as a barn door nor so high as an artesian well, but they serve. There are many alluring pools in the brook that courses through the shadows, but fishing is prohibited. In the heart of the woods is the place where the Bohemian Club holds its "jinks." It is, of course, a matter of taste or opinion, but the performance of anything less classic than a Greek play seems to me a profanation of these Hellenic groves.



IV

DEL Monte seems to have affected Karl Baedeker emotionally; he scatters stars on the hotel and its surroundings. The hotel is an elaborate affair set in the midst of wonderful trees and gardens. It is an admirable place for the ladies—God bless 'em—to display their gowns; but for poky people who do not care for peacock plumage and the continual spreading of peacock tails, the hotel at the Grove offers a more secluded retreat—and a poorer table.

The celebrated ** Seventeen Mile drive from Del Monte around the peninsula deserves the two stars that Karl gives it; for it is unmatched for beauty and variety of scene. There is the ocean wonderfully coloured; there are rocks with seals lolling on them,

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and other rocks crowded with cormorants and pelicans; sand dunes and headlands; woods of pines and live oaks, and a famous cypress grove. The pines, indigenous to the peninsula, seem to be a cross between the white pine and the Norway—being barked somewhat like the one and leaved somewhat like the other. The cypress, also indigenous, are absolutely unique. Crooked, misshapen, uncanny, they are just the setting for a fairy tale in which a witch is featured. Or they huddle like a group of old men in a Maeterlinck play. Stevenson's lively fancy pictured them as trees under which murderers might crawl. In such a grove Macbeth might have given his instructions for Banquo's taking off.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the drive is the diversion to Carmel, the home of a colony of literary and painty folk. We digressed chiefly for the purpose of visiting the Carmelo Mission, beneath which Padre Junipero Serra is buried. The original church was restored, after a fashion, two or three decades ago, and services are now held in it twice a month. The caretaker showed us the interior and recited, with tears in his eyes, the many virtues of Padre Junipero.

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We were wholly unprepared for the climax. Just such another man, he assured us, was Theodore Roosevelt. For, quoth the ancient Portuguese, Mr. Roosevelt was a "fair man."

This naïve opinion, expressed in such a place, recalled an incident that Peter Dunne once related to me. He was in Rome, attending some tremendously important mass—just what, I shall not attempt to specify, for one is almost sure to go astray. Whatever it was, all the dignitaries were present, including the pope. During the most impressive part of the ceremony Dunne noticed one of the celebrating priests regarding him fixedly; and a little later, when the priest passed by him, he paused and inquired of Dunne, in an eager whisper; "How did the election go? Did Carter Harrison get in?" It developed that the father had been called to Rome from Chicago, but had retained his interest in local politics.

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I confess that I do not esteem this miraculous climate as highly as it deserves. It is as cold—or as cool—at Monterey as at San Francisco. And they call to-day the hottest that they have had this season! We sat in a

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Japanese garden and warmed up a bit with hot drafts of tea. The days are unbrokenly sunny—and dusty: "The dust of an earthy to-day is the earth of a dusty to-morrow." We sympathized with a woman who passed us on the street remarking wistfully to her companion: "I wish I might see a snowstorm. I haven't seen one for twenty years."

Glass-bottom boats go out from Pacific Grove, and the condition of the water—the "seeing," as the astronomers term it—is chalked up daily on a bulletin board. To-day the announcement is "Conditions very favourable." Do they ever vary it? It recalls the sign over a theatre: "Gigantic Success."



V

MONTEREY, aside from its historical association, as the ancient capital of California, holds for us a sentimental interest because Robert Louis Stevenson once lived here. Our interest would be greater were it the Monterey Stevenson knew and loved. But since his day have come motor cars and hotels, souvenir shops and picture postcards, glass-bottom boats, and golf links, peanuts, popcorn, and pink lemonade. To re-create the town that Robert Louis wrote about, one would have to employ extensively the process of elimination. The spirit of the place is still "pocotiempo" (Spanish for hookworm), but the tourists and touring cars,

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the souvenir hunters, and the picnickers kick up such a bustle that only at night, when the moonlight falls on the mouldering adobe walls, can one visualize the Monterey of more than a quarter of a century ago. Even the pungent saltiness that Stevenson found in the air from the sea has evaporated. At least we could not apprehend it by the most persistent sniffing.

The house in which Stevenson lived still makes a shift at standing. The postcards of it must have been made from an old photo, as they show a still decent place, with a book store in one corner. A bold sign on the house reads, "R. Stevenson House." Only a sign painter would rob the gentle author of his given names. He might have spared the "R" and his paint. The house is now all shot to pieces, but the place continues picturesque, even under the meridian sun. Ivy climbs the crumbling walls, and in the long neglected yard, roses grow wild, and nasturtiums and lilies, geraniums and daisies. We pick a single flower and place it between the pages of Baedeker. What a firm hold R. L. S. has on the affections of people who knew him only through his tales and essays.

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A placard on the house announces that it is for rent, so we visited the agent to see what part of the considerable structure Stevenson inhabited; but he could tell us nothing, nor could he think of any one better informed. It might be preserved as a literary shrine, but probably the matter is not of sufficient importance. No attempt is apparent to preserve any of the historical buildings in the town, though some of them are well worth keeping from ultimate decay. Stevenson, as I recall it, lived in Monterey only a few months, and while there wrote one of the stories that I like the best—"The Pavilion on the Links"—which have nothing in common with the Del Monte Golf Links. The young woman in a book store informed us that "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and "Treasure Island" were composed here, but she is wrong about one of them and probably about the other. "Treasure Island" was not begun until after Stevenson's return to Scotland.

Dwelling on Stevenson, I am reminded that in "Across the Plains" he followed the same trail that we came over a week or so ago, and I have a hazy recollection that he found the deserts of Wyoming and Nevada bitterly

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uninteresting. But he was ill, and housed in an emigrant train, while we viewed the landscape from an observation car. I might refresh my memory of "Across the Plains," as there is a public library a block away—but "pocotiempo"—it is a block away.

Arethusa, who is a natural enemy of "pocotiempo," has just returned from the library, and reports that Stevenson wrote a good deal of Monterey; and it all comes back as she relates it. The town then boasted only a few streets, and there were no houses or Pacific improvement associations on the wooded peninsula, no motor road through the weird live oaks and cypresses. Great fires were then denuding the hills of California, and Stevenson feared, and with reason, that all the forests in the state, in a decade or two, would be destroyed. He tells how, through curiosity, he touched a match to the bole of a tree, which exploded like a rocket and started a tidy little fire, while Robert Louis ran as he had never run before to escape lynching at the hands of his enraged neighbours.

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On the main street of Monterey, in a little

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yard before a little cottage, grows a large and beautiful rosebush. It is known as the "Sherman Rose," and the story of it runs thus: When Gen. Sherman was quartered here, a long, long time ago, he presented a small rosebush to a certain señorita, promising that when the bush began to bear he would return and marry her. The roses have bloomed many years, but the general—yes, you guessed it—the general did not return. We were desolated by the romantic tale, which seemed strangely familiar. Have we heard it before in one form or another? I believe we have.



VI

ON our way north we stopped off for a look at the Big Trees, at Santa Cruz. The grove is privately owned, which accounts for the fine young Coney Island which flourishes therein. An admission fee is charged, and an elderly gent leads the daily flock of tourists from tree to tree, exuding exaggeration, going Baedeker several better as to height, circumference, diameter and age. As soon as the main division of sightseers scurried off we headed in the opposite direction; we desired a closer communion with the ancient sequoia. The trees are named after eminent Americans, in the order of their visits to the grove.

Within the shadow of these sylvan patri-

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archs is a dance platform, a cracked piano, a shuffleboard, a postcard gallery and what not. People come to this grove, which should be sacred, take a casual look at the trees, exclaim, "Ain't they grand!" or, "H—I, there ain't no sich thing!" and devote the remainder of their time to sandwiches, shuffleboard and dancing. The wonder is that they came at all. It may be wrong to thank God that one is not as other men; but in certain matters, such as appreciation of our planet and taste in wall-paper, one might be permitted to congratulate the creator and oneself.

Lake Tahoe is well within the advance notices of it. Old Father Description would be put to his stumps to convey an impression of the lake's marvellous colouring under summer sunlight. Even the Spanish painter who made such a hurrah a few years ago—I haven't seen his name in print in so long a time that I have forgotten how to spell it—could not produce these sapphire waves cresting and breaking into snow. The lake is one great prism, and the rainbow that lies in the steamer's wake adds nothing to the sea of colour. There are hotels and villas on the

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west and south shores, but the east and north are comparatively wild.

There is good fishing in the Truckee River, into which Lake Tahoe discharges. All water looks alike to the tourist. "Show a tourist water and he'll fish there," declared an "Old Codger." "Show me a man who has sense enough to pull a chunk of pork out of a barrel and I will show you a man who will get fish." (Referring to the sportsmen who troll in the lake with copper wire, a pound of sinker, and a handful of bait.)

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What, then, are our impressions of California? First, that its people are hospitable and good tempered, their amiability deriving, perhaps, from the benign climate. Second, that while other features of the state are interesting, the climate is the thing chiefly talked about—the mother of bromides. Third, merely as postscript, the days are invariably sunny, and

"THE NIGHTS ARE ALWAYS COOL."

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We mean to tarry at Salt Lake and push around a bit in its heavy waters. You may

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have heard that when the railroad cut-off was built across the lake, heavy boulders designed for foundation floated away like corks. A person attempting a dive would bound across the surface and likely wrench his neck. However, we hope to pry our way into the lake, wrap the water around us, and wait for the invigourating effects.

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I intended to do considerable fishing on this trip, but fishing, as a side issue to traveling, is seldom achieved. The only way to go fishing is to go fishing.



Footnotes to Baedeker

Canada—East

I

MORE or less misadventure attends our annual hegira. Last year the railroad company mislaid our baggage and a delay of twenty-four hours was the result. This year the taxicab company left us in the lurch—a not uncommon occurrence, as a taxicab company is always ready to bite off more than it can chew. Happily our neighbour, Col. Hambleton, rescued us in midstreet and whirled us to the station in bogey for the Rush Street course.

We looked for the advertised "library car"

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on our train—the usual sumptuous coach with leather chairs, writing desks, embossed stationery, and all that—but found it to consist of a mere parlour coach plus a dozen novels and magazines. The conductor informed us that they once had the more elaborate car, but discarded it because “it was such a dismal success”! (Sic.) Canadians attend to their correspondence before leaving home, and they take life more easily than we—a statement you may have met with before. “You Americans live too fast,” the conductor further confided. The opinion originated on this side, and our neighbours take pleasure in repeating it when opportunity offers.

Nothing in the foregoing should be construed as a lament for the gilded library car. The train equipment was adequate, and the crew attentive and courteous. A friend of ours maintains that Canadian trainmen are much more polite than American, and I have gathered that the transition is as abrupt as that from the colder waters in the Atlantic to the warmer waters of the Gulf Stream. But everybody is not so alert and observant. Many people cross the equator without noticing it.

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Many people, too, have an idea that the Arctic cap comes down to the northern boundary of these United States, and Canadians have long ceased to find this fallacious notion amusing. Kipling adopted it, along with his Young Man from Quebec who was buried in snow to his neck and who, when superfluously asked, whether he were "friz," replied, "Yes, I is!"—adding that in Quebec the prevailing temperature was not regarded as low.

I see no difference between Southern Canada and the northern boundary of our blessed country, save that there is more breathing room at present over the border and ten wild places to summer in, to one on this side. At Kingston, for example (though Kingston is far from wild), there is fishing and boating and swimming in quantity and quality to suit the individual taste. The Rideau River, as far as Ottawa, offers unlimited camping ground, and the St. Lawrence with its islands is likewise within striking distance.

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We dropped off at Kingston for a day, and found it an uncommonly quiet place with a great number of attractive old houses. The

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chief industry of the city appears to be religious calm, judging by the number of churches and by the somnolent atmosphere that pervades the place. The sound of church bells is as magically evocative as the pipe of the piper of Hamelin.

In the afternoon we chartered a funereal appearing carriage and visited the remains of Fort Henry across the river. An interesting fortress in a state of picturesque delapidation. Peace has spun cobwebs in the cannons' mouths as prettily as a cartoonist can do them, and war and rumours of war seem distant as the Pleiades. What a place for a boy to "play Indian"!

There are underground passages and dungeons at Fort Henry, and while wandering through them I reflected how little attention was paid to sanitation in the best days of dungeon building; the ventilation is extremely poor, and the lighting leaves much to be desired. I was informed that the gentleman who laid the fortress faced it wrong, and, on being recalled, committed suicide on his way back to England. The criticism of his plans seemed to me ill-founded. The view is excellent, and had I the work to do I

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should face the fortress precisely as it stands to-day. The English builder was super-sensitive.

Our driver was communicative, but we really heard nothing about Kingston until evening. Passing a china shop, Arethusa spotted a piece of old Wedgwood, and we entered the place, to be imprisoned for an hour by a flow of talk unequalled since the yarn of the Ancient Mariner; and, like the wedding guest, we could not choose but hear. Passing from the various processes of china manufacture, the shopkeeper began on the history of Kingston, with copious footnotes. I was the recipient of one exquisite confidence. "You know," said he, referring to the second wife of one of the early governors of New York—"you know" he dropped his voice to a whisper—"she was part Indian."

Eventually we bolted, leaving the narrator in the middle of a sentence. A delightful gossip! Had I infinity of leisure I would gladly devote an aeon or two to hearkening to the history of Kingston.

Daylight found us boarding the steamer for Montreal and presently we were among the w. k. Thousand Islands. A hundred

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would have done me as well. Having canoed through the isle-studded lakes of the north-land, islands are "nothing to me, marm," as the London busman remarked of nether limbs to his modest lady passenger.



II

THE rapids of the St. Lawrence are mildly exciting. As the compositor usually makes a “w” of the “m” in “mildly” I ask unanimous leave to repeat that the swift water of the St. Lawrence is mildly exciting. Shooting rapids in a steamer is much like landing a trout on a two-pound sapling or having oneself carried by guides to a mountain-top in order to qualify for a membership in a mountain-climbing club. The man at the steamer wheel may get a thrill out the Lachine rapids, but they impress me chiefly as a nasty place for a canoe, and I wondered how far one could go into them without upsetting.

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There was music in the cabin of the Quebec steamer. A Frenchman who looked like a well-to-do tradesman sang badly without solicitation, to his own worse accompaniment, while his wife beamed down upon him from the balcony. This started things, and the next singer was very good. Eventually a large-voiced vocalist delivered "The Two Grenadiers," and as this seemed a fitting climax the audience dispersed and the piano was left to a persistent Englishman with side whiskers, who painfully picked out all the national airs and ancient ballads in his moth-eaten repertory. There is always one of these pests aboard a steamer, and I have observed that when he is on deck he never stands near the rail.

At Quebec we changed to the Saguenay steamer and enjoyed a daylight view of the shores of the St. Lawrence, which are much finer than one expects. There are innumerable tempting valleys, and the sight of a fish-rod filled me with immeasurable regret that my travelling this summer was confined largely to steamers and trains. Like the Shropshire Lad, who sighed that twenty years are little room in which to look at things in

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bloom, I feel that any summer not given to the wilderness is thrown away beyond recall. And I am properly reproved whenever I voice this narrow and sentimental notion.

A good deal of fol-lol was observed at Murray Bay—low neck, conventional black, “and all that rot.” Some of the ladies come down to the wharf wearing long white kid gloves and wave studied farewells. They add nothing to the scenery, but the deckhands are noticeably impressed.

I asked for American newspapers at the Manoir Richelieu, but found that Chicago papers were not taken because two days are required for their transmission. The supply of New York papers was limited. As the youth at the bookstall explained, “It is better to miss selling three papers than to get stuck with one.” Canada, I believe, went Conservative at the last election.

We reached Tadousac just in time for one of those unanticipated glimpses that make a scene memorable. The fast dropping disk of the sun hung for a few moments in the dark portal of the Saguenay River, midway of the cliffs. Then the roll of the world shut it from view.

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On entering the Saguenay one becomes as exclamatory as a summer-resort folder. The best way to describe it, perhaps, would be to set down in columns a few pages of adjectives, in the manner of Rabelais or Sterne. Capes Trinity and Eternity were not so Plutonian and impressive as I had imagined them, but then nothing is. (Business of sighing.)

The black, fathomless flood of the Saguenay fascinated me more than its shores. I was less interested in Cape Trinity than in the ringbolts set into the cliff in the days of sailing vessels to provide moorings, for the water below the rock is deeper than the mountain is high. I hunted up Captain Dugal, and learned a few things not in the folders. His charts, for example, are marked, in effect, "forty fathoms, and no bottom." When the channels of the St. Lawrence and the Saguenay were charted, the government was satisfied to find sufficient water for navigation, and unless the *Geographical Survey* has added to the slender stock of information, "two hundred fathoms and no bottom" marks the limit of the government's curiosity concerning

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one of the most mysterious rivers on the globe. A long reef extends across the mouth of the stream and north of this the soundings pitch off to unknown depths, and in the river, from wall to wall, there is no anchorage.

Only a few men have been curious about the planet on which we dwell—the only one we can ever learn much about. Only a few men are curious about anything of account. The great majority of us are content with forty fathoms and X.

Tadousac was the most interesting of all the places at which the steamer touched, and two hours ashore generated a strong desire to spend a month there. The hotel seems not impressively smart, the landscape is wonderfully beautiful, and there are hills, and trout streams, and beaches, and the Saguenay. What more could you desire?

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Having assisted in identifying a multitude of Chicagoans, it remains for me to identify myself as one who killed an afternoon in Quebec trying to cash a check. I had left home in such a scramble that letters of credit, express orders, and the like had been neglected, and I was very soon reminded of my

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carelessness. The reply from my Chicago bank was so slow in coming that after luncheon I put on a fresh suit of clothes and new hat and shoes, knotted my necktie as carefully as the hero in the novel, and sallied forth to discover how far a presentable exterior and a more or less open countenance would go toward raising the wind on a foreign strand. As you conjecture, they got nowhere at all. I cannot complain of my audiences, which comprised prominent bonifaces, railway officials, and ornaments of the fourth estate; all of them were sympathetic, and they suggested the most ingenious methods for getting a cheque cashed. One railroad man contributed a story of a friend of his who had let a man have a ticket to Alberta and cashed a cheque into the bargain only to be basely defrauded. "I am not telling this as any reflection," he said, genially. "I hope you don't think I am foolishly sensitive," said I.

The managing editor of the *Quebec Telegraph* had the happiest thought. He advised applying to the United States consul, but I knew that that good man, whoever he was, had afflictions enough without taking on a case that was far from des-

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perate. So, thanking my professional brother and inquiring the location of the consulate, I strolled back to the hotel, thinking how confiding were Thomas Cook and Son when, one summer, they let Arethusa have a couple of yards of railroad transportation through Italy and Switzerland without security and told her that she could pay their agent at Montreux when her delayed remittances arrived. "But how do you know that I will pay you?" she asked, amazed. "O, I know you will," replied the man, thus closing the incident.

How singularly confiding, too, was Mme. Gauthier of Tadousac, who had accepted my cheque in payment for a shawl. Her daughter, a plump and pink-cheeked damsel, guaranteed the paper with a dimpling smile. I must send her something at Christmas.

"Life is growing more complex every day," especially that part of it which is concerned with the Boston & Maine timetable. The gentleman who put it together may be able to take it apart, but I have never known any one equal to the feat; and, as "information bureaus" are paradoxical but not ingenious, I decided that the easiest way to reach Bethlehem, N. H. from Quebec, was to go to

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Boston or Baltimore, and head north again. When you get into the White Mountain country you have to coax information from conductors and station agents, and you must be constantly alert, as your car is likely to be detached from the train without warning. Although prepared for these tricks, they put one over on us; our car was shunted into a railway yard, and we had to tote our luggage up the track to the station.

I found that I had really forgotten how beautiful the hills of Vermont are. Usually such things are haloed in memory, but in this instance recollection had not done justice to the subject. There is nothing in California, or Colorado, or elsewhere, so far as I know, to equal the landscape that one views from the tail of a train passing from Bellows Falls to Rutland, and down the valley to Manchester, or from a motor passing over the range from Manchester to Bellows Falls. A beautiful playground is New England, but no place to work in.

While in Manchester I looked in on C. F. Orvis, known to many who have cast a trout fly. He has a very interesting shop, but I knew its contents without entering, for years

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ago I used to read the proofs of his annual catalogue. C. F. is one of the old time unterrified Democrats of Vermont, and our job printing office was the only one of any size that was Democratic.

Here is a characteristic bit of Vermontese that I picked up. A native was besought to saw some wood, but he declined. The owner of the wood offered double price for the sawing, and still the native declined. He was pressed for a reason, and this was it: "Damned if I'll humor a man."

We stopped off for a day at Felsengarten, the summer home of Mrs. Theodore Thomas, the warmth of whose hospitality contrasted markedly with the abominable weather and the gray clouds that hung over the Franconia mountains. Gardens have done as poorly in this Eastern country as elsewhere. Even the Glessner garden has failed to give the usual glowing account of itself.

After a fortnight or so of leaping from boat to boat and from train to train, it is a blessed thing to hunt a deserted corner, light a pipe, and meditate on the pleasure of staying at home. Be it ever so luxurious, there's no-o-o place like ho-o-me.

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"Where is your sense of humor?" asks Arethusa, when I growl at the accidents of travel; but she enjoys knocking about from historic pillar to storied post, and I don't. My favorite cuss phrase is, "See America First!" When the lady cashier in the swagger hotel is sniffy, when the dining room superintendent is incompetent and cocky, when the Pullman porter is uncommunicative and surly, when the hotel clerk is supercilious, when the food is bad and the price is high, I find it relieves one's pent emotions to glare at the offender and say: "See America First!"

September 1912

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Footnotes to Baedeker

Canada—West

I

THE war spirit in Canada is high. I have never before seen so many people with "extras" in their hands. For the first time in thirty years the Winnipeg newspapers have issued on Sunday. The earlier instance was an "extra" published at the time of the Real rebellion. This eruption of excitement in Winnipeg gives one some notion of the gravity of the European situation, for always a Canadian Sunday has a millpond looking like a storm off Hatteras.

If England had provoked hostilities it is

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doubtful whether Canada would have manifested more than a perfunctory interest. As the situation is to-day, probably a hundred thousand volunteers can be counted on for garrison duty in the British Isles, and many of these (headed by the Canadian Hotspur, the minister of militia at Ottawa) would be crying "On to Berlin!" There is an incidental reason. The Canadian west is "jelling" in an industrial way. The boiling era is about over, and thousands of youngish men must either get out and grow things on the farm, or embrace the alternative of war. For the young and adventurous, joining an expeditionary campaign is more attractive than farming.

We are in Winnipeg two days earlier than we expected to be. The intention was to plow the Mississippi from Savannah to St. Paul, but fearing that the good ship *St. Paul* might be requisitioned by the government to add to its naval strength, we headed north by rail. This change of plans threw our sleeping-car reservations into confusion, but Mr. J. M. Willard of the C. P. kindly disentangled things for us here, and we are off to Vancouver to-night.

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To-day was devoted to seeing Winnipeg, and we could have "made the Line" forty times with "signs of the times," but we generously left these for contribs who stay up this way.

We have been congratulating ourselves that we postponed our trip to Europe until next year. I am fond enough of ruins, but I don't care for them piping hot.

In case of a general mix-up in Europe we are wondering how we shall arrange our sympathies. Naturally they are with France and England, but our cook at home is pro-German, and we can't afford to sacrifice a good cook to a sentimental interest in the success of French and English arms. Obviously we shall have to be discreet in our table talk.



II

INTERCESSIONAL

Head of the Proof Room, pipe your eye
Along the lines of this here stuff.
You know what awful breaks get by,
Although the writing's plain enough.
Bill, watch the stuff the typos set,
Lest they forget—lest they forget!

Lake Louise, Aug. 12, 1914.

THERE are several ways of looking at the mountains of Canada. If there is a moon, one very pleasant way is to recline in your berth, the lights in the compartment extinguished, and watch the slow-moving panorama while the engines haul their heavy load up the grade. The moonlight softens the serrated skyline, the scarred battlements, and the pinnacled heights [I bor-

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row these phrases from the C. P. guidebook] and deepens the enchantment which distance lends the view. [There's one the guidebook overlooked.] The torrent seems much farther away than it is, and the glaciers that feed it seem much nearer heaven.

Another good way to look at this country is to disregard the warning of the croaking old gent in "Excelsior," and "try the pass." We shall not soon forget the afternoon we rode from Emerald Lake over the ridge and down into the valley of the Yoho, where the C. P. maintains an excellent camp, facing the really wonderful Takakkaw Falls. Viewed from a great height, our planet is a rather attractive ball. I don't expect to see a better, but for the purpose of comparison I memorized a few landscapes, and recollections of this world may possibly survive in the next.

The war spirit in Canada is still running high. In a shop window in Vancouver a lock of the Duke of Wellington's hair was on exhibition, and this, with a number of other relics, stimulated the populace immensely, and the recruiting office hung out the S. R. O. sign. We saw a phalanx of recruits on the wharf. From the step they kept coming

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down the hill, I conjectured that many of them had seen service—deserters, perhaps—and, encouraged by the offer of amnesty, had decided to have another shot at it.

It was Sunday when we left Winnipeg for the coast, so I couldn't buy a Canadian Baedeker, but I discovered a very good substitute in Mr. Farrell, sleeping car conductor on No. 1. I advise all travellers in this part of the world to cultivate the acquaintance of the affable Mr. Farrell.

I dare say the Cannery is shot to pieces, but I hope Jar 4 is intact—"What a little world this is!" The only persons we spoke to in ten days' travel turned out to be friends of friends of ours. Coming down from the great glacier of Illecillewaet, we passed the time of day with a couple climbing skyward; these disclosed Lake Forest affiliations. Rolling down to Yoho we passed the salt to two ladies at luncheon, and these disclosed themselves as very good friends of Charles Stanton and his good wife, of San Francisco. Doubtless many such acquaintanceships would transpire if one chatted with everybody that one passed on the mountain or rode with in the valley, but I am no more disposed

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to start a row with a stranger than to open a conversation.

You know those attractive windows in house-furnishing shops—brass bed, made up for occupancy; easy chair, rugs, etc. How sleepy would you have to be to sleep in a show window on Main Street? Coming up from Seattle on the night boat, I decided that I had as soon try to sleep in a show window as on a boat when the fog whistle is working. A most damnable iteration.

Speaking of boats, I wonder whether there is one afloat, ocean liners aside, that is not permeated, from stem to stern, with the odor of frying fish.

The news-stand lady in the Chateau at Lake Louise tells me that she gets only one copy of the W. G. N., although several times she has ordered five. The fortunate recipient of the one *Tribune*, who has a mortgage on it for several days to come, is pursued all over the place by Americans who yearn for a look at their favourite family journal.

The lake is, to my notion, an overlauded institution. Tourists rave so about it that one expects more than nature has been able ever to do, barring an occasional tour de force like

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the Grand cañon. But the bed and board in the hotel is good, and there is a minimum of fluff about the place. It is deservedly the most popular drop-off along the railway.

One is never tired if he can see far enough, says Emerson. I think it was Emerson; I don't find the quotation in the C. P. guide. At any rate, when I reached the summit of a certain pass in the Rockies, and gave my cayuse a friendly kick, I needed all the view there was in order to recuperate.

The name scheme of one group of mountains does very well for the next. There is always a Cathedral mountain, and a Saddle-back, Castle Cascade, Temple, Pilot, and Storm. You can't escape "Lookout Point," nor "Mirror Lake," nor "Twin Falls." If I should discover a new range I should be able to christen every feature of it as rapidly as I came to it.



III

YE who have supp'd full with First Page horrors may find these casual notes of a returning traveller dull reading. On the o. h., you may be interested to learn that when we passed through Medicine Hat, the world's greatest summer resort, the temperature had passed the 100 notch. How far, no one took the trouble to ascertain, as the Hatters were too busy to notice the desiccating heat. As I had not advised the Board of Trade of my coming, the Silver Cornet band was not at the station, and the address of welcome by the secretary went undelivered. It was just as well, as the ceremony might have diverted attention from the baseball game, which begins at 6 o'clock.

Twilight was settling over the sun baked plains. I took a long look at the south branch of the Saskatchewan river, the name of which stream has stirred my imagination as long as I can remember. It was disap-

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pointing. A river needs hills or forest—rapids or green bordered reaches of still water. Perhaps the North Saskatchewan is as romantic as I have pictured it.

It has been a bit odd to be so far from a telegraph wire when the greatest drama of modern times is unfolding, and to be dependent for news on the handbills printed in the small towns along the line of the C. P. Some of these "extras" are smaller than the sheet I used to publish in the young 'eighties, when the amateur newspaper craze was at its craziest. At each station the passengers on the Imperial Limited, most of whom are English people, swarm out on the platform to inquire the latest word of the great war. I was a great distance from the night room of the W. G. N., but had I elected to revisit the glimpses of the Delectable River this August I should not have known that war had been declared, and three or four armies and navies might have been obliterated before I broke out of the brush.

RULE, BRITANNIN!

Now as for coffee, which from east to west
"Cheers the tar's labour or the Turkman's rest,"

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'Tis sorry stuff except when made at home
(Riming, as you anticipate, with "roam").

But tea is different. The well known sun,
Which never sets on lands by England won,
Likewise sets never—take this tip from me—
Upon an ill-brewed cup of English tea.

They do not cook a spoonful in a pot,
Nor douse the leaves with water merely hot:
Tea boiled by Yankees is a poison brew
Or a decoction weak as honey-dew.

But tea that's made beneath the union jack
Is fit for drinking, whether green or black.
They put a plenty of it in the pot
And pour on water that is boiling hot.

So, when from our United States I roam
(Riming, as you anticipate, with "home")
All teapot tempests I serenely brave,
For Britain—or Britannin—rules the wave!

German pancakes were on the dining car
bill of fare. I suggested to Steward Campbell that these should be taboo. He agreed with me and promised to feature French pancakes thereafter.

The Stewards on the C. P. diners are very
good at reading faces. Coming down from

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Moose Jaw the Missus looked askance at the soft boiled eggs, and Steward Bragg observed the elevation of eye-brows. That evening there came a rap at the compartment door, and a polite gentleman, who disclosed himself as Inspector Rubanson, presented us with a dozen new-laid eggs, to be turned over to the diner beyond Portal. He had hied him to some hennery to obtain them.

At St. Paul the Missus marched me up a hill as resolutely as the King of France, and we "did" the capitol, which contains some good mural decorations. By electric to Minnehaha Falls, and thence by motor to Minneapolis, rounding up in Mr. Walker's considerable picture gallery. Here are gathered so many canvases, set so closely together, that long looking at them gave me a sort of vertigo. I tottered into our compartment on the train.

"We might have stayed another hour in the gallery," remarked the partner of my j. and s.

"We are out for a rest, you know," I protested.

"This is resting."

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"Psychologically, perhaps."

"You don't need a rest; you need a change."

I was too feeble to debate the point.

There are many ways of "resting," including the theatrical person's. My own method of recuperation hasn't had a look-in on this sentimental journey. "Down to Gehenna or up to the throne," he only travels as he pleases who travels alone. Yet the Missus maintains—and no doubt with truth—that as long as she has known me I never did anything that I didn't want to do.

Comfort is only another term for habit. The older we grow the more "sot" we become, until any break in the routine of existence spells discomfort. One's slippers must be beside the bed and one's clothing disposed on the same hooks and chairs day after day; the water for shaving must be of the right temperature; breakfast is wanted when it is wanted; and so through the twenty-four hours.

Now travel disarranges this routine, therefore it is well to travel—more or less; to fish for slippers in the welter of a valise's contents, to shave with cold water, to breakfast at some one else's convenience, and, in general, to move along the line of most resistance.

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Even good habits need disrupting now and then, for the pursuit of comfort leads to selfishness and inconsiderateness, as the paths of glory lead but to the grave.



Jaunts Near Chicago

I—Aurora

ARETHUSA was studying the trolley map again. "We might go to Aurora," she said presently.

"Anything," I agreed, "to get away from here. The breeze has been flapping the window curtains all morning, and it's becoming a trifle annoying.

"I simply must get into the country," said Arethusa, "I can't be cooped up in town another day."

"How does one get to Aurora—by the Twenty-second Street line?" I inquired.

"No; we take a fast electric train at Fifth Avenue and something," said Arethusa, "and go all the way to Aurora without change.

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Then comes a beautiful ride along the Fox River to Elgin, and thence back to Chicago."

"Let us fare forth into the merry sunshine," said I. The thermometer can't be a notch above 80 degrees.

"I feel so sorry for the poor people who can't get out in the air," said Arethusa, as we set forth. "You would best put up the umbrella—the sun is a little strong."

We reached the station at Fifth Avenue and something a little after twelve o'clock. The next train for Aurora left at one. We sought luncheon and found a bad one.

By one o'clock half of Chicago seemed bent on going to Aurora. A perspiring throng filled the waiting room. It was Saturday—we had forgotten that. "Perhaps," said Arethusa, "we would better go to Evanston instead, and trolley along the North Shore."

I assented, and we climbed to an "L" platform. Here we found most of the people in Chicago who were not going to Aurora. The shops were letting out, and bright faced lads and lasses were swarming up the "L" stairs. Train after train went by, loaded to the limit.

The East Window

"Perhaps we would better go home," said I. So again we footed it across the city. The heat was terrific, but the people were rushing madly through the streets—some headed for Aurora, others for Evanston.

Shall we ever get into the country? sighed Arethusa.

Eventually we did.



II—Elgin

THE longing for the country is inextinguishable in the hearts of those to whom communion with green fields has become a necessity. Parks won't do at all. So when I remarked Arethusa studying her trolley map I knew we were destined for another excursion.

"We can't make a mistake in going to Lake Geneva," said she.

"'Tis well spoken of," I agreed. "But we can't get back in time for dinner."

"We will spend Saturday night and Sunday at the Lake," said Arethusa.

Which settled it.

The route was as follows: To Elgin by trolley; to Marengo by another trolley; to Fontana, on Lake Geneva, by trolley.

We reached Elgin safely, and presently the car for Marengo came along—one lone

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car. In the rush for it we were hopelessly distanced and then it was impossible to squeeze in. The day was sizzling—the worst thus far of the summer.

There would not be another car for an hour, which was too late for our purpose, so we decided to take a Northwestern train for Geneva and a boat down or up the lake to the hotel which had seemed rather attractive in the resort advertisements.

So we wandered across the river and climbed a sunny hill to the railway station, only to learn that we were in West Elgin. Back to Elgin, pausing on the way to inquire at the St. Paul station whether they had any trains going anywhere in particular. They were very nice, but they had nothing in stock to match our whims. Thence to the Northwestern station to discover that the next train for Geneva left at five twenty,—two hours away.

“I am famished,” said Arethusa. So I inquired of a gentlemanly druggist the address of a good restaurant. He mentioned a hotel which shall be nameless. “Is it first class?” I inquired. “You bet it is,” he responded with enthusiasm.

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You bet it—But never mind.

“What street is this restaurant on?” I questioned the sad-faced waiter.

“I never asked,” said he, “for fear I might stay here. Me for the East next Saturday.”

After the meal we repaired to the railway station. Most of the flies in Elgin were in the waiting room. A few that were out of doors came in and joined us.



III—Lake Geneva

THE 3:20 train from Elgin to Lake Geneva is more deliberate than fate. Fate makes all the stops, but fate does not back up at each station to get a fresh start.

Said I to the pleasant-faced conductor: "The station agent at Elgin tells me that any information I may need about Lake Geneva I can get from you—that you know all about it."

"I ought to," said he; "I get there at half past seven at night and leave at six in the morning."

However, he was able to tell us that a boat left for Fontana at eight o'clock, and as we succeeded in catching that our troubles seemed ended.

It was delightful on the lake. There was no moon, but the stars were out. The warm south wind, freighted with the perfumes of

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the woodland, blew softly and steadily. We sailed for an hour, and wished it two.

"This," sighed Arethusa, "is worth all the exertion it cost to get here. On such a night how quickly the cares of the day are forgotten. At last we have got into the country!"

"Yes," said I. "And the night shall be filled with music, and the cares that infest the day shall fold—"

"Now, don't engage the most expensive room in the hotel, as you always do," said Arethusa. "Why, what is this place we are stopping at? It looks like Luna Park."

"This, I take it," said I, "is our hotel."

We stepped ashore in the glare of a thousand lights. A great crowd of ladies and gentlemen were promenading on the lawn. Within the dazzling hostelry a dance was in progress. We heard the loud bassoon.

"Mercy! We can't stay in such a place," said Arethusa.

Prophetic words! There was not a room to be had. Nor was there any other hotel. Besides the last boat had gone. Incidentally, the last trolley south had departed. All the exits were closed.

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"What shall we do?" said Arethusa.

"Let us pause awhile and consider," I replied.

Arethusa rallied her spirits. "At least," quoth she, "we have succeeded in getting into the country."

"Ay, now are we in Arden, the more fools we," said I. "When we were at home we were in a better place; but travellers must be content."

"Under the Greenwood tree," hummed Arethusa. "But perhaps we can put up at the Yerkes observatory. We know astronomer Brooks of Geneva, N. Y., and I'm sure if you mentioned his name—"

"There's a lady down the street," said the hotel clerk, approaching us, "who told me to-day she could accommodate one more party."

A party of both first and second parts, we hoped, as we groped our way down an unlit lane.

Yes; the Lady of the Cottage could take us in. "I will show you your room," said she.

We ascended a flight of stairs. In the upper hall was a smallish bed, screened by

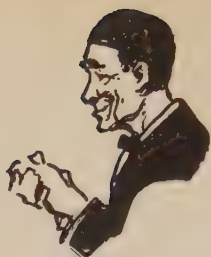
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a curtain of cheesecloth. "It is the best I can do," said the Lady of the Cottage.

"That makes it unanimous," I replied politely. "I have no doubt we shall be very happy here."

And why should we not have been? Happiness, like Massachusetts, is a state of mind. True, it was rather stuffy, and there were mosquitoes, and a strident piano somewhere; but there was also a full chorus of katydids, and later a bit of moon—and we had accomplished our great purpose, which was to get into the country.

And he that attaineth the country (to paraphrase Bacon) hath given hostages to comfort.



IV—The Discourager of Travel

WE were alone in the Pullman smoker when an alert gentleman wearing a silk skullcap came in, nodded, and asked solicitously: "Are you perfectly uncomfortable."

"Perfectly," we replied. "The train is dirty, the service is bad, and the food in the diner is atrocious. However, I don't complain. Any one who travels these days who doesn't have to is looking for trouble."

The alert gentleman beamed, and rubbed his hands together. "I am glad to hear you say so," he remarked, and, turning back his coat, he disclosed a badge bearing the words, "Discourager of Travel."

"Ah," said we; "it was you who removed the fresh towels from the washroom and shut off the water." He smiled affirmatively. "And these little piles of dirt and burnt matches

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in the corners—is that your work, too?”

“Yes,” said he; “those are property matches.”

“But tell me,” we said, “how do you manage to get such a dead smell in the Pullmans at night?”

“Gas,” he replied. “Perfectly harmless, but perfectly unpleasant. As for the food in the diner, that is what Mr. McAdoo calls an iron ration. Did you notice the corn muffins?”

“A triumph,” said we. “Nothing more unappetizing was ever concocted.”

He chuckled. “A little recipe of my own.”

“Well, how does it work?” we asked. “The trains continue to be crowded.”

“Yes,” he sighed. “No matter what we do, the public insists on travelling. We have removed two coaches from this train, but it is carrying as many persons as usual.” He rose. “I must see to the coffee for luncheon. I am experimenting with a combination of dried acorns and alfalfa.”

“Don’t trifle with your luck,” we advised. “The mess this morning was incomparable. You can’t improve on it.”

He grinned and vanished.



The Back Trail

I

8.4 0.3 Fork, bear right—Sign “Cummington,”
keeping left across small iron bridge 9.2 into

13.4 5.0 Goshen. Hotel on left. Straight on—

—Automobile Blue Book.

DID the author of the “Old Oaken Bucket” ever revisit the scenes of his childhood? If he did he probably found the ancient water-carrier much smaller and less attractive than fond recollection imagined. Or perhaps some city millionaire had bought the farm, and loosed a landscape gardener in the orchard and meadow and deep tangled wild-wood, and

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this person had ravaged the old place until it was unrecognizable. Advice to guide "The Return of the Native," if sentimentally inclined: Don't.

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Rather late in the afternoon we left Boston in a motor car. Not knowing how good the roads were except by hearsay, and being rather in a hurry to get somewhere before nightfall, I passed through Concord without so much as a glance at the famous birthplaces scattered around that section. My destination was the scene of my own nativity, in the Berkshire hills—not that I was especially desirous to see it, but it was a point on the chart to steer for. The roads were so amazingly smooth and wide that we were at Fitchburg by dusk; and after taking one look at it hastened on. A little beyond we missed the road, through overlooking one "iron watering trough in fork" (see the valued Blue Book, any page), and so landed in Ashburnham, on a hilltop. The Central House proved to be a good country hotel, kept by the long-lost country landlord who asks you, when you pay your bill, whether you smoke. This veteran opened up, also, as a mine of information on old times

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and old-timers. A gap of twenty years was bridged and I suspect that my amiable gossip put the bridge in the bill next morning.

The following evening we made Williamstown, passing over the Mohawk trail—one of the best motor rides in the world. Williamstown, a college place, has perhaps the finest street in the country. Our stay was brief, as the Inn was crowded and the service only so-so. The roads of New England have been improved, but the good hotels are few. My notion of “building a house by the side of the road and being a friend to man” is to anticipate every conceivable want of the traveller and then soak him a good round sum for the entertainment.

On the way to Pittsfield we passed another famous birthplace, that of Josh Billings. Oddly the sign which announced the fact was correctly spelled.

Leaving Pittsfield, we headed east, and half way down a sandy hill, unshaded by a single tree, we blew a tire. It disappeared like the boy of the burning deck, and although I searched the vicinage for it, all I could find was a handful of tattered fabric to which adhered particles of rubber.

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Changing the tire occupied forty minutes, which was quick work, considering my method, which is to light a pipe and sit on the wayside fence until an able-bodied citizen happens along, when I hail him and ask whether he knows how to change a tire. If he does, and is willing, as he usually is, I tell him that the jack is under the front seat, and poke the ashes of my pipe with "a meditative forefinger." Of course, if one is on a back road and the sun is declining, one must change the tire himself, but on the main pike there is no use in mussing up one's clothes if the job can be let out.

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The shadows were lengthening in the valley of the Swift river when we passed the birthplace of William Cullen Bryant. My interest in this poet was recently demolished by an article by Harriet Monroe, so I wasted no sentiment on the really lovely village of Cummington; besides, my own birthplace was a few miles farther on, at the top of Goshen hill. There is no sign to guide the traveller, and it is not mentioned in the Blue Book, but I found the old place—a commanding knoll which slopes down to the pond—the pond

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once famous for pickerel, and the slope for blueberries. The farm house was gone; on its site is a modern dwelling, inhabited by a professor, who preaches some doctrine or other in Northampton. All of Goshen hill has been combed and brushed and is now a mere resort for summer folk. I lingered long enough to turn the automobile around in the narrow road, and then we coasted down the long grade to Williamsburg, where my father was born, and his father before him. We could have remained on the hill, where it was comparatively cool; but a flash of sentiment prompted the visit to Williamsburg, which simmers in the evening heat. This and a bad dinner extinguished my interest in the place, from which I departed in the morning without a single backward glance.

What I thought, as the car droned down Mill River valley, was how different my life had been from that my father had led. When he was a very young man in Williamsburg he visited Northampton to hear Jenny Lind sing; and when he came out of the hall, instead of returning home, he took the train to New Bedford, and shipped on a whaler bound for the North Atlantic. After many

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years of listening for the lookout's "There she blows!" he entered the navy when the Civil War began, and distinguished himself on more than one occasion. He might have retired as rear-admiral had he pulled a wire or two. Instead he took service with James Gordon Bennett as his navigator when that eccentric gentleman owned and raced the famous *Dauntless*. They had real yacht races in those days.

That seems romance to me. I remember a cylindrical canvas bag that my father kept in a closet. It was stuffed with navigator's charts—fascinating rolls that I pored over hours on end, for then my mind ran much on ships and sailormen. That bagful of Romance was lost in moving—left in the closet. I would give something for it to-day.

"People are sometimes blamed," says Anatole France, "for speaking of themselves. Yet it is the subject which they treat of best. They are interested in it themselves, and they often make us share in that interest. There are, I know, wearisome confidences, but the bores who plague us by telling us their own histories completely overpower us when they relate those of other people. A writer is

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rarely so well inspired as when he talks about himself."

It may very well be that the confidences which a glimpse of Goshen Hill has prompted are wearisome, more likely to overpower than the history of a character in fiction. And I am certain that I have felt more interest in the characters I have briefly evoked than in any of my own adventures. But this may be because every one who writes fiction puts something of himself into all of his characters. He cannot do otherwise, much as he would like to. It would be very nice to step outside of one's self and survey mankind from China to Peru, but no one has succeeded in doing this, not even, one may venture, that master of fiction, the creator of the universe.

The blazes along the Back Trail are faint and far between, and among the faintest are those in Goshen. The home of my parents was really New York City, whither I was removed a few weeks after my introduction to the world. To write interestingly about one's childhood, one ought to have had an interesting childhood, and mine, it seems to me, was the dullest imaginable, passed as it was in the wilderness of brick and stone which

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constituted Manhattan Island in the Black Walnut Period. My earliest years were spent in a really interesting section of the city, Greenwich Village. Macdougall Alley, now the haunt of artists, who have converted stables into studios, was part of my playground; and Varick Street, into which all roads led—why, that was the broadest and handsomest thoroughfare imaginable. There were then no Purple Cows, or Rabbit Holes, or other Bohemian lairs, but even when I was nine or ten I sensed the difference between Greenwich Village and Yorkville, in which drab neighborhood my parents misguidedly established themselves. I have always regretted that I was not brought up amid country scenes. My childhood was defrauded of trees. To be sure, there were trees in Central Park, but these must have appeared to me like the trees of Stageland. It was not until I was about eighteen, when I went to live in Franklin County, Massachusetts, that I made the acquaintance of a real landscape; and it is to the sudden revealment of the lovely New England countryside that I trace my never diminishing love of trees, especially the pine. George Moore holds that the pine is not a tree

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at all, and you readily understand that a person of his temperament would prefer a beech or an oak. One cannot kiss under a pine and then run and tell, and Moore had to make "copy" of all his kisses. They made delightful copy, but it was rather severe on the ladies.

A week or so ago I met my friend the Doctor, and he remarked that he was on the edge of starting for another voyage on the Delectable River. He added, with a malicious smile, "Don't you want to join me?" That was bad enough, but he went on to relate that last summer he discovered four new lakes, each as beautiful as the miracle of loveliness to which Tawab the Indian led him some years ago. I asked where the trail to these jewels left the river, and as I asked, memory unrolled the chart of the stream, from the small lake in which it headed to the great lake into which it debouched. Did I remember Tawab's portage?—The trail began near there. Yes, I remembered that portage—a mere lift around a jam of fallen trees. There was a wide, foam-flecked pool below the jam, and our camp was on the east bank, which was high, and the forest

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was more open than usual. There was no wind stirring, and the smoke from our fire rose as straight as the smoke from the bottle which the fisherman in the Arabian Nights found in his net. But this was not a wood in which one might hope or fear to meet a Genie. Instead, one thought of the Valkyries riding by, under the steel-grey sky, streaked with the rose of a Canadian sunset, or of young Siegfried on his way to annihilate the dragon. The trees in Central Park never suggested anything to me, except that I might lean against them while I buckled on my skates. They must indeed have seemed mere "property" trees, else when passing under them at night I should have peopled their shadows with the queer folk of the Grimm tales. My imagination was lively enough at the time. The *mise-en-scène* was at fault.

My school days must have been extremely commonplace, I remember so little concerning them. I attended a public school in East Fifty-Seventh street, but the only other student that I recall was a tall, dark-haired youth who, at graduation, recited "Horatius at the Bridge." Yes, I remember the prin-

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cial, an amiable Irishman, who said "fut" when he obviously meant "foot." I was not unfamiliar with the accent, for my mother's father was as Irish as Paddy's pig, and grandmother would have fitted nicely into the stage pictures of the Abbey Theatre. They were, however, town folk, living in Dublin; but what their manner of life was I have never thought to inquire. Nor do I know any more concerning my Massachusetts grandparents. They were, I believe, respectable, and so there never was even the promise of a rope's end to stimulate curiosity. Genealogy (usually pronounced geneology) is a noble science, and there are many eminent and worthy practitioners of it. Mr. James Branch Cabell, for example, is an expert in supplying family trees as John Wellington Wells was in supplying love philtres. But the family tree is the one species that does not engage my interest. All I know of mine, and care to know, is that I am at the top, where there is plenty of sunlight.

If you are not "completely overpowered" will you return with me, for a few more paragraphs, to the top of Goshen Hill and the modern dwelling on the site of which

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once stood a farmhouse of the sort called rambling, and in a room of which farmhouse the writer of these rambling reminiscences first expressed his dissatisfaction with the best and the worst of all possible worlds.



II

WHAT became of the old house? I might have pulled the doorbell of the new and made inquiry; but the occupant might be enjoying a siesta, and—I was not especially curious. The old house was gone—burned, I think, and probably was not rebuilt. I must have made many visits to it, yet the only room I remember was the kitchen. This was spacious, and had a door at each side, through which, in their season, passed a myriad of flies. I have a clear recollection of these flies and of Aunt Jennie's tolerance of them. The dining table was very long, and was covered with a red cloth, and netting restrained the flies until all hands, in-

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cluding the hired, were piped to mess. The netting was then whisked off, and men and flies battled for the good things underneath. Musca in those days was regarded as a nuisance rather than an evil, but it never occurred to anybody to screen the doors and windows.

Another feature of the old place which memory retains was the pasture sloping down to the pond. Within its confines grazed two horses which Uncle Tim had brought with him from the Civil War. They were, likely, two as amiable plugs as ever switched a tail, but I could not have regarded Phaëthon's steeds with more respect. When I rode them they did not respond readily to my guidance, and I was told that cavalry horses were not as other horses are. I have believed that to this day.

The pond was famous for pickerel, and many years afterward, prompted by sentiment, I spent an hour trolling along the shore, with indifferent success. It was a pleasing sheet of water, and let in, I believe, to a pond lower down, the dam of which once gave way and caused the still remembered Mill River disaster, in which many lives were lost

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and much property was destroyed. I was shown the tree in Haydenville to which another aunt, by name Luce, clung desperately amid the swirling waters. The Luce place attracted me more than the Goshen homestead, because the barn was connected with the house, by a series of low buildings; and I promised myself to have a home like that. The nearest I have come to it is to have a house to which the garage is joined.

I have been told that the Springfield *Republican's* account of the Mill River flood is a classic of reporting, and I dare say it is. There are many such classics. A notable one was the work of a reporter for the New York *Herald* who had been assigned to cover the ordination of a bishop, or something of the kind. Like Roger the monk, he got "exceedingly drunk," and, missing the ceremony totally, was obliged to invent an address for the bishop. It was a good piece of work, but such is the pride of authorship that the bishop preferred his own views, and complained that he had been misquoted. The reporter was reprimanded, but he retained his desk. In that day brilliancy was esteemed above steadiness. Now, even the

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rewrite man, who supplies the brilliancy, must be steady as a milkman's horse.

My most notable feat of reporting was done for the *Chicago Journal*, but I have never said much about it. I was told off to keep account of a libel suit which involved two prominent citizens, and visited the courthouse faithfully for ten days or more. The trial ended abruptly, in favour of the defendant, and I met the plaintiff coming away from the courthouse. I tarried to discuss with him the miscarriage of justice, and completely forgot my newspaper, which went to press with no word of the trial's end. The managing editor was so annoyed by my dereliction that he took me out of the local department for a fortnight and set me to writing editorials. A few weeks afterward "The Colyum" was born. But that—as we used to say before the phrase was worn to ribbons—is another story. There has never been, by the way, a satisfactory successor to that Kipling tag.

George Moore—a quotable wretch—said admiringly, in speaking of newspaper work, that a reporter can describe anything, even a boat race. He makes a good fist at it

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himself, in "A Story Teller's Holiday." Prowling at night among the ruins in Dublin which resulted from the late rebellion—

"A pleasant home, no doubt, it once was," he wrote, "and in my imagination I saw a family collected around the fender after the evening meal, mother reading a tale from a popular magazine to the children, the cat purring upon her knees. A somewhat commonplace subject for an article, I said, but one that will please the readers of *The Irish Times*. A plaintive 'Miaw' reached me, and a beautiful black Persian cat appeared by the fireplace. A cat is almost articulate, and Tom asked me to explain to him the meaning of all this ruin. He has found his old fireplace, I said, and tried to entice him; but, though pleased to see me, he would not be persuaded to leave what remained of the hearth on which he had spent so many pleasant hours, and pondering on his faithfulness and his beauty I continued my search among the ruins, meeting cats everywhere, all seeking their lost homes among the ashes and all unable to comprehend the misfortune that had befallen them. It is true that cats suffer vaguely, but suffering is not less because it is

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vague, and it seemed to me that in the early ages of the world, shall we say twenty thousand years before Pompeii and Herculaneum, men groped and suffered blindly amid incomprehensible earthquakes seeking their lost homes, just like the cats in Henry Street. We are part and parcel of the same original substance, I said, and then, my thoughts breaking off suddenly, I began to rejoice in Nature's unexpectedness and fecundity. She is never commonplace in her stories, we have only to go to her to be original, I muttered, as I returned through the silent streets. I could have imagined everything else, the wallpaper, the overmantel, and the French clock, but not the cats seeking for their lost hearths, nor is it likely that Turgenieff could, Balzac still less."

Moore's conclusion, that we have only to go to Nature to be original, might be communicated, to their profit, to students in colleges of journalism. Too much reporting consists of "corroborative detail" hastily invented to lend a hoped-for interest to what appears to be otherwise "a bald and unconvincing narrative"; but commonly the fact and fiction are so unskillfully mixed that the entire story seems unreal, artificial. Reporters are al-

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ways trying to match Ko-Ko's cleverness in the invention of the execution of Nanki-Poo—and not quite succeeding. We who write have only to go to Nature to be original; if we cannot find originality there, 'twere folly to look further. Moore found a good story in Henry Street because he knew something of Pompeii and Herculaneum and the physical state of things in the early ages of the world; he had, in a word, background. But even a reporter who has nothing but foreground, and very little of that, may do well to disregard fiction and seek in his few facts that slight something which differentiates his story from a thousand others seemingly the same.

It may seem to you that I have wandered from the trail; but it is, from portage to portage, a trail of printer's ink, and so my feet are always on it, whatever the digressions. I am reminded at this point of my earliest literary adventure.



III

MY earliest attempt to escape from reality (the end and aim of all writers, including the realists) took the form of a small manuscript magazine, circulated surreptitiously in the schoolroom. It was free, therefore successful, and I was encouraged to essay a novel; but when I showed the first chapters to my father, he pronounced it rubbish. I accepted the verdict without demur. It did not occur to me to ask by what right a navigator of ships constituted himself a judge of novel writing. But Bowditch and Byron stood side by side on the family bookshelf, and I may have assumed that there was as close a connection between navigation and literature. At all events, I deserted literature and turned to journalism. There was at the time an eruption of amateur newspapers all over the country. Mine was called *The Aerolite*, and Harrison Grey Fiske, editor of

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The Dramatic Mirror, wrote a serial for it; that is all I remember of it. I was connected with the *Mirror* in the capacity of office boy, the other members of the staff being the business manager and the editor. The composing-room adjoined the office, and the entire plant was housed on the top floor of a small house in Union Square. The type for the *Aerolite* was set at odd times by one of the *Mirror's* printers, who bore the obvious sobriquet of "Full Face" O'Brien. A few years afterward, when I was running a small paper in western Massachusetts, Mr. O'Brien came into the office, and the unexpected reunion was very cordial. It was a cold night in winter and "Full Face" was half frozen, having lately crawled out of a freight car. He asked whether he might sleep the night on the office floor. With a lively sense of past favours, I offered him a better bed and a steady job at the case, but he declined both offers, satisfied to stretch himself on a pile of newspapers in a corner, and to depart on the third day, with a few dollars in his poke.

During my connection with the *Mirror* I met, intimately, the leading men and women of the American stage; for besides being the

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paper's office boy I was its bill collector. I recall holding up eminent tragedians in the lobbies of the Fifth Avenue Hotel and the Hoffman House and presenting my accounts—with results as substantial as a comet's tail. These postponements used to irritate me. I was too young to be awed by the tragic presence of a Barrett or a McCullough, and—the *Mirror* was hard up. My colleague, the business manager, used to warn me, when I set out, "Don't come back without money. I have to pay off this afternoon." A thing that I remember very clearly was that Fanny Davenport once kissed me—"jumping from the chair she sat in." It was, I scarcely need add, a motherly caress, and was followed by a cheque discharging the lady's obligation—which pleased me much more than the kiss; for you cannot pay off printers with a kiss. My particular friend in those days was a somewhat elderly man, Salmi Morse, I think his name was, who was staging a pretentious passion play. I trotted about a great deal with him, and took a vast interest in his enterprise. A number of other theatrical persons tolerated me, despite my pestiferous bills, and I was made free of Stageland. I liked to

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wander through its forests and caverns and visit the dressing-rooms; but, oddly, the romance of the profession never took hold of me—then or later.

At some time—probably between the ages of fifteen and seventeen—I attended the College of the City of New York, having graduated from grammar school. With rare insight I elected to take the “business course,” and, wishing to attain a business style, “familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious,” gave my days and nights to stenography, bookkeeping, and other studies which were to prove as useful to me as a fourth leg to a trivet. These two years would have been thrown away but for the fact that I gave my days and nights only figuratively to business. Actually I gave them to reading, beginning with the home library, the books in which were few but good. I cleaned them up in short order—Byron, Bowditch, Bunyan, “Tristram Shandy,” “The Culprit Fay,” “Tom Jones,” “Undine,” “Don Quixote,” “Plutarch’s Lives,” and a number of others. “The Culprit Fay” and “Undine” introduced me to a world which I have inhabited ever since, at least a part of the time.

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Bowditch was Greek to me, but I pored over it because I dreamed of following the sea—an aspiration which was sustained by a roll of navigator's charts in the cupboard and a naval officer's sword over the what-not. The charts were lost in moving, the sword now belongs to a Grand Army post in New Jersey, and my dream of the sea vanished when I was obliged to put on eyeglasses. Bowditch was succeeded by the Bellman, the immortal hunter of the Snark.

To and from college, in the rocking horse-car, I devoured Mr. Beadle's celebrated dime and half-dime novels; but on reaching home I was content to hide these under a bureau and take up "Don Quixote" in their stead. The present generation does not, I think, read Cervantes. From no other book have I derived so much enjoyment. If the satire touched me it must have been only slightly. My sympathies, almost tearful, were with the Knight of La Mancha, and I thought Sancho a dull and irritating fellow, to whom the Knight was unconscionably kind. The only poet I could read was Byron, and many years passed before a taste for English poetry developed. Correspondingly, the only fiction I

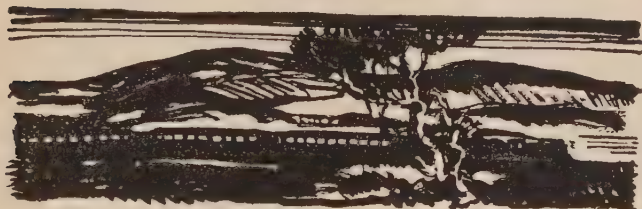
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avoided was that written in the epistolary style, which now I rather prefer. Novels, novels, novels; these were my subsistence. I got a card at the Mercantile Library, and set out to clean that up as I had cleaned up the home bookcase. As I exhausted one author I took up another, something in this order: Scott, Smollett, Fielding, Dickens, G. P. R. James, Thackeray, Harrison Ainsworth—but not Richardson; I have yet to read Richardson. By instinct I avoided the books written especially for “young people,” and thus gained, on the whole, more than I missed. I did not read “Thaddeus of Warsaw,” but “The Gunmaker of Moscow”; I missed “The Swiss Family Robinson,” but not “Robinson Crusoe.” Unorderly and indiscriminate as was my reading, if I had to do it over again the only improvement I can think of would be to substitute for twenty or thirty English novels as many volumes by Greek and Latin authors.

Of my “education” this is all I can remember. Some of the things thrown at me in grammar school and college must have stuck. Some did—bits of chemistry and a great deal of the German language. My father did not

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approve the "business course." He suggested Harvard or Yale. But he was not well enough informed himself to guide me. His life had been spent on the sea, but it was the sea of Bowditch and Dana, not the sea of Homer; and so I missed a classical education. Who, looking backward, can measure the extent of such a deprivation? I am writing this near the storied walls of Harvard University, and these remind me of Henry Adams. I should have liked to have had his education. It did not satisfy him, but it might have satisfied me. Absurd reflection! For every man and his education are one and indivisible.



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